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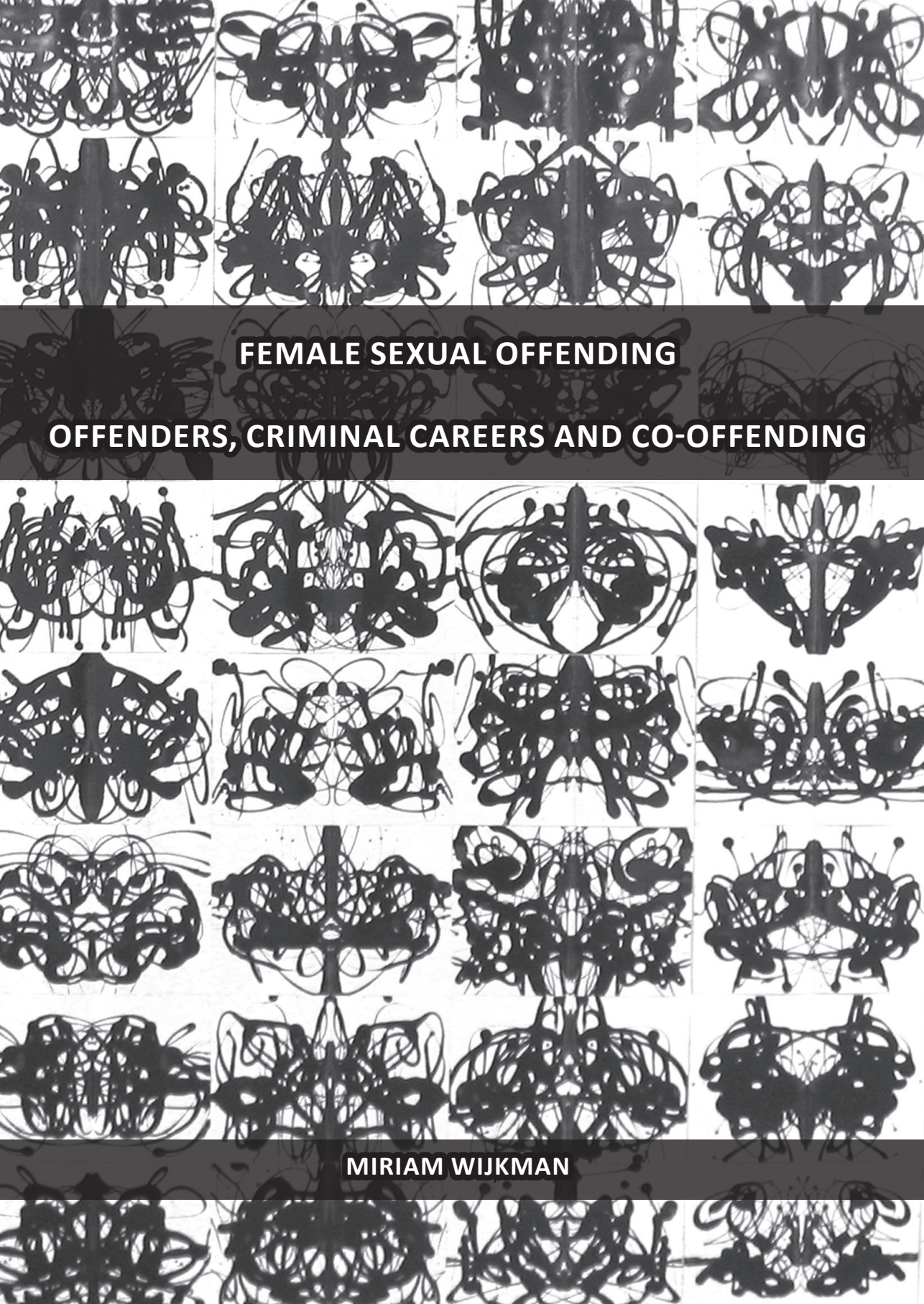
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FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDING

OFFENDERS, CRIMINAL CAREERS AND CO-OFFENDING

MIRIAM WIJKMAN

Female sexual offending
Offenders, criminal careers and co-offending

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Offenders, criminal careers and co-offending

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Chapter 1 General introduction

1.1 Introduction

'I didn't believe it, I simply didn't believe it...when [the victim] told me that she [the suspect] would sexually assault him in his bed and while giving him a bath. I felt like laughing. I mean it was ridiculous. It was like everything was in reverse. The world upside down...it was surprising'. [male detective]

'You want to know what happens when a case of [sexual assault] comes forward involving a female suspect and a male victim at our office? The entire office breaks out in laughter. Lots of snickering. It's not taken seriously'. [female detective]

'We see women as mothers, as caretakers. We put women on a pedestal, and with good reason. The woman is the mother of the family – that's the image that we have of her'. [male detective]

These quotations from police officers working at a sexual assault unit (Denov, 2004b) are characteristic of what many people think: sexual offenses are committed by men. This is also reflected in the fact that research on female sexual offenders is scarce: the majority of studies on sexual offending focus on adult or juvenile males. Worldwide, just a handful of studies have been published on female sexual offenders and their personal characteristics, offense characteristics, motives and criminal careers. This is also true for the Netherlands, where the studies for this thesis were conducted.

At the same time, victim studies and self-report studies on sexual offending show that female sexual offending is not as rare as many may think. In Dutch victim studies between 1.3-1.5% of the female victims and 22.2-42.4% of the male victims reported they had been sexually victimized by a female perpetrator (Bakker et al., 2009; Bakker & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006; Dijk, Veen, & Cox, 2010) and international studies show a similar rate varying between 1-9.3% for juvenile females and 14-52% for juvenile males (Saradjian, 2010).

Even if female sexual offenders may constitute a small group and may be responsible for a small proportion of all sexual offenses, the short-term and long-term impact of sexual victimization is relatively large, varying from medical and sexual problems to psychological problems and (sexual) revictimization (Beitchman et al., 1992; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Some scholars suggest that the effects of sexual victimization by a female perpetrator may be more serious than the effects of sexual victimization by a male perpetrator (Bunting, 2007; Denov, 2004a).

The aim of this study is to describe the characteristics of female sexual offenders and their offending careers. It is well known that there is variation in various aspects of male sexual offending. Researchers have attempted to address this heterogeneity by developing classifications. Such classifications have been based on the age of the victim (child molesters versus rapists), the age of the offender (juvenile versus adult offenders), the presence of any co-offenders (solo-offenders versus co-offenders), whether there was physical contact with the victim (hands-on versus hands-off offenses) and offenders' criminal careers (versatile offenders versus specialized offenders). Such heterogeneity is arguably also present in female, adult, as well as juvenile sexual offenders.

The rationale for studying female sexual offenders' characteristics, as well as heterogeneity in these characteristics, in terms of their offenses and victims (chapter 2 and 4), based on criminal career parameters (chapter 3), and based on co-offending patterns (chapter 5), is firstly to provide a knowledge base. A second rationale is to provide data to further theory formation on female sexual offending and risk assessment for (sexual) re-offending, treatment programs and intervention and prevention strategies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2010). Theories on female sexual offending are scarce; risk assessment instruments for this group do not exist.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of sexual offending laws in the Netherlands (section 1.2), prevalence rates of female sexual offending as derived from victim-studies, perpetrator-studies and official judicial data, as well as a short discussion of the problems in establishing these rates (section 1.3), followed by an account of what is known of heterogeneity in sexual offenders and their criminal career (section 1.4). The research questions underlying this thesis are introduced in section 1.5 followed by a description of the data sources used to answer these questions (section 1.6).

1.2 Sex offending laws 1990-2013

In the Netherlands, sexual offenses are listed in articles 239-240, and 242-250 of the criminal code. In this section hands-on offenses (articles 242-249) are described (see table 1), as this thesis focuses on hands-on offending; hands-off offending is only included for instance when the offender(s) has created audio-visual material like pornographic photos or movies in the course of a hands-on offense.

The definition of sexual offenses is not stable, and in fact, a number of articles in the Dutch criminal code have changed in the past decades. For the topic of this thesis, the most important changes were made in 1991. Before 1991, the legal definition of rape (article 242) was: "he who through violence or threat with violence *forces a woman* to have *carnal intercourse* outside of marriage will be punished as guilty of rape with a prison sentence of twelve years maximum or a

fine of the fifth category". The wording of "carnal intercourse" delineated that only men could commit rape, and mentioning a woman as the victim implies that men could not be the victim of rape. It also meant that rape could only be committed outside of marriage.

Thus, until 1991 women could technically not be guilty of rape, and men could not be victims of rape (Lünnemann, Nieborg, Goderie, Kool, & Beijers, 2006). This was not unique for the Netherlands. Similar situations existed for example in Canada until 1983 (Tang, 1998) and in England until 1994 (Horvath, Tong, & Williams, 2011). After 1991, the legal description of rape became gender-neutral in the Netherlands. As we see in table 1 '*woman*' was changed into '*someone*', and '*carnal intercourse*' was changed into the broader definition of '*sexual penetration of the body*'. With the first alteration, men as victims were acknowledged, while with the second alteration it was possible to convict a woman who performed acts like anal/genital penetration of the body. An evaluation of these two legal changes showed there was indeed an increase of male victims of rape, and that a few women were convicted for rape (Lünnemann et al., 2006). For this thesis, prosecution data that are analyzed, start from 1993 (see section 1.5 for a description of the data). The likelihood that cases have been included that were registered according to the pre-1991 definition, is small. In table 1.1 the labels and description of the penal code articles on sexual offenses are given.

Table 1.1 Description of hands-on sexual offenses within the Dutch Criminal Code

Article	Description
242	Rape: he who through violence or another matter or threat with violence or with another matter forces someone to undergo acts that consist of or partially consist of the sexual penetration of the body.
243	Intercourse with a will-deficient: he who commits, with someone of whom he knows that he is in a condition of unconsciousness or physical inability, or suffers such an insufficient development or sickly disturbance of his mental capacities that he is unable to determine his will in this regard or make it known or put up resistance against it, acts that consist of or partially consist of the sexual penetration of the body.
244	Intercourse with a child under the age of twelve: he who commits, with someone below the age of twelve years, acts that consist of or partially consist of the sexual penetration of the body.
245	Intercourse with a person under the age of sixteen: he who commits, with someone who has reached the age of twelve years but has not yet reached the age of sixteen years, outside of marriage, lascivious acts that consists of or partially consist of the sexual penetration of the body.
246	Sexual assault: he who through violence or another matter or threat with violence or with another matter forces someone to commit or to allow lascivious acts.
247	Lechery with an unconscious person or a mentally handicapped person or child: he who commits, with someone of whom he knows that he is in a condition of unconsciousness, impaired consciousness, or physical inability or who suffers from an impaired mental development or disease-like disturbance of his mental capacities such that he is unable or not fully able to determine his will on this matter or make that will known or resist, or with someone below the age of sixteen outside of marriage lecherous acts, or seduce the latter person to commit such acts or endure such acts with a third person.
248-248e	Increased penalties + special articles
249	Lechery with abuse of authority: 1. He who commits lecherous acts with his underage child, stepchild, or foster child, his pupil, a juvenile entrusted to his care, education, or vigilance, or his underage servant or subordinate. 2. With the same punishment will be punished (1) the civil servant who commits lechery with a person under his authority or entrusted or commended to his vigilance; (2) the manager, physician, teacher, functionary, overseer, or employee in a prison, state institution for child care, orphanage, hospital, or charitable institution who commits lechery with someone admitted there; (3) the person who, working in health or social care, commits lechery with someone who has entrusted himself as patient or client to him.

Source: Bijleveld, C.(2007)

In the Netherlands, the minimum age of consent is 16 years and sexual acts committed against or with persons under the age of 16 years constitute a crime. The Netherlands does not have an article for statutory rape like the USA and England do. Statutory rape entails that an adult who performed sexual acts with someone who has not reached a certain age of consent is guilty of rape, regardless of whether the sexual acts were consensual. The Netherlands does however have articles which can be interpreted as statutory, in the sense that the age of the victim determines whether the acts constitute a crime, regardless of consensuality; see for instance article 245.

1.3 The prevalence of sexual offending, prosecution and sanctions

To gain more insight into the extent of female sexual offending, this section presents results from self-report studies on perpetrators, victim studies, and official criminal justice data (i.e. crimes recorded by the police, registrations by the public prosecutor and judicial decisions). By comparing victim studies and perpetrator studies, we will attempt to assess the prevalence of female sexual offending. Next, official data on female sexual offending, showing how the prevalence of female offending declines steeply are described. Lastly, sentencing decisions on male and female defendants of a sexual offense are compared.

1.3.1 Self-report studies

In the Rutgers WPF (World Population Foundation) 2006- study on sexual health (Bakker & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006), self-report questions on sexual coercion were included. The respondents (4,147 men and women aged 19 to 70 years) were asked if, and how often, they had ever forced someone to do perform or allow sexual acts they knew the other did not want. This broad description was the definition of 'sexual coercion' employed in this study. The researchers mentioned when introducing the survey-questions that sexual coercion could be expressed in many ways varying from rape or sexual assault to sexual harassment in the workplace or forcing someone to strip in front of a webcam. In this survey, 4.5% of men and 2.1% of women reported they had used sexual coercive behavior.

In a follow-up study, that used a different methodology, the Rutgers WPF 2009-study (surveying 6,428 men and women aged 15 to 70 years), 1.7% of women reported they had used sexual coercive behavior, while this was reported by 9.4% of the men. Women had mostly victimized men (83.4%) (Bakker et al., 2009).

In a Dutch study involving adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 23 years (Slotboom, Hendriks, & Verbruggen, 2011), sexual aggression was studied. The questionnaire as used in this study was an adapted version of the questionnaire as used by Krahé, Scheinberger-Olwig and Bieneck (2003).

Respondents were asked: "have you ever made (or tried to make) a male/female have sexual contact against his/her will by threatening to use force or by harming him/her, by exploiting the fact that he/she was unable to resist (e.g. (s)he had too much alcohol and/or drugs), or by using verbal pressure?" Sexual aggression was reported by 8% of female participants and by 10.3% of male participants.

Outside of the Netherlands, Struckman-Johnson et al. (2003) reported that 26.5% of surveyed women and 43.2% of surveyed men (respondents aged over 16, average age 20 years) had used at least one so-called 'tactic' to have sexual contact. These 'tactics' were divided in four themes i.e. 'sexual arousal' (e.g. persistent kissing and touching), 'emotional manipulation and deception' (e.g. threatening to break up), 'exploitation of the intoxicated' (e.g. purposefully getting someone drunk) and 'physical force and threats' (e.g. using physical harm). In a study by Krahé et al. (2003), 9.3% of females (age 15-24) reported they had at least once made a man engage in nonconsensual sexual acts. Nonconsensual was defined as 'sexual contacts where the female used or threatened to use physical force, exploited the fact that he was unable to resist or put verbal pressure on him'. No male respondents were included in their study.

Summing up, Dutch as well as international self-report studies show that the differences between men and women using sexually coercive tactics may not be as large as generally assumed. Self-report studies that survey mainly young respondents seem to report higher female offending/coercion rates than studies where respondents are on average older. Results differ, but on average we can say that the smallest male-female ratio concerning sexual coercion and sexual aggression is 1.3 : 1 for Dutch studies, and 1.6 : 1 for non-Dutch studies, which implies that according to self-report studies men use sexual coercion/sexual aggression slightly more often than women.

1.3.2 Victim studies

While a number of (long-running) victim surveys also gather data on sexual victimization (the International Crime Victims Survey and the Integrated Safety Monitor (Dutch: Integrale Veiligheidsmonitor (IVM)) of Statistics Netherlands (Dutch: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)), from these surveys only the prevalence of sexual victimization is reported, and not the gender of the perpetrator. Therefore, these surveys will not be discussed in this thesis. A number of tailored surveys have however asked after victimization of sexual offenses and also specifically asked the gender of the perpetrator. The findings from these studies are presented in table 1.2. Three studies asked only after sexual victimization in the context of domestic violence; two other studies asked after sexual victimization outside of the home and in the broader context of sexual health.

Table 1.2 shows that the proportion of female sexual perpetrators differs from 0-7% in studies on domestic violence, and differs in studies on sexual health from 1.3-1.5% in sexually victimized women and 22.2%- 42.4% in sexually victimized men. We see that these proportions differ, but such variability is often seen in victim studies with different methodologies. In general, the more specifically questions are defined, the higher the prevalence rates of (sexual) victimization become. This is also the case in the two Rutgers WPF studies. In 2006 only a proportion of the sample answered the specific questions on sexual violence, while in the 2009-study all respondents were asked all specific questions. The use of specific questions which incorporate, for example, the age of the victim, or the nature of the sexual acts, may trigger memories that might not be retrieved in association with a more general question, or may facilitate recollection of abuse incidents (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990). Given different wording in the various questionnaires employed in the surveys, this variation is therefore not surprising. Furthermore, some studies use a very broad and different definition of sexual violence and explicitly mentioned hands-off behavior ("forced to undress, other examples of sexual violence that had happened to you"). Finally, studies use different methodologies, which makes it difficult to compare the findings.

Differences in the proportion of female sexual perpetrators as reported in international research were comparably wide ranging. Based on a review of victimization surveys using different samples (e.g. sexually abused males attending a clinic, child line cases, and incidence studies), Saradjian (2010) estimates that between 14 and 52% of sexually victimized juvenile males, and between 1 and 9.3% of sexually victimized juvenile females had been sexually abused by a woman. As these studies differ widely in terms of sampled populations and survey methodology, it is difficult to derive one average estimate. Cortoni and Hanson (2005) conducted an extensive review of female sexual offending victimization. Six victim surveys were included in their analyses, originating from Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Five of these studies were population-based surveys, one study was a cohort study. The definition of sexual offending was broad (unwanted sexual acts, rape and sexual assault) and the reference period differed from ever, prior to age 16 and previous year. According to the review, the proportion of female sexual offenders ranged 3.1% to 7%, with an unweighted average of 4.8%

Table 1.2. Details of studies on domestic violence and sexual health

Source	Intomart	Intomart	Intomart	Rutgers WPF	Rutgers WPF
Year	1997	2002	2010	2006	2009
Object of study	Domestic violence	Domestic violence	Domestic violence	Sexual health	Sexual health
Nature of offenses	Hands-on Hands-off	Hands-on Hands-off	Hands-on Hands-off	Hands-on Hands-off	Hands-on Hands-off
Question phrasing	"someone was standing very close to you with unwanted sexual intentions", "you were forced to undress yourself", and "someone raped you"	Same as 1997-study	"you have been raped", "someone tried to force you to commit certain sexual acts" "other examples of sexual violence had happened to you"	Have you ever experienced sexual violence in your life? Examples are offensive sexual behavior or unwanted fondling, or being forced to do or tolerate sexual acts (at home, on the street or on the internet).	Same as 2006-study
Ethnic background respondents	98% ethnic Dutch	Turkey Surinam Morocco Dutch Antilles	72% Ethnic Dutch 28% other	89.8% ethnic Dutch/western 10.2% other	91% ethnic Dutch/western 9% other
# resp.	1,005	849	6,427	4,147	6,428
Age resp.	18-69	18-69	18+	19-70	15-70
Prevalence sexual victimization	Lifetime: 13% of men 30% of women	Lifetime: 47% of men and women	Last 5 years: 2% of men 7% of women	Lifetime: 7% of men 39% of women	Lifetime: 5.8% of men 33.5% of women
% Female perpetrators	2% according to male and female victims	0%	7% according to male and female victims	22.2% according to male victims 1.3% according to female victims	42.4% according to male victims 1.5% according to female victims
Reference	Van Dijk, Flight, Oppenhuis, & Duesmann, 1997	Van Dijk, Oppenhuis, Abrahamse & Meier, 2002	Dijk et al., 2010	Bakker & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006	Bakker et al., 2009

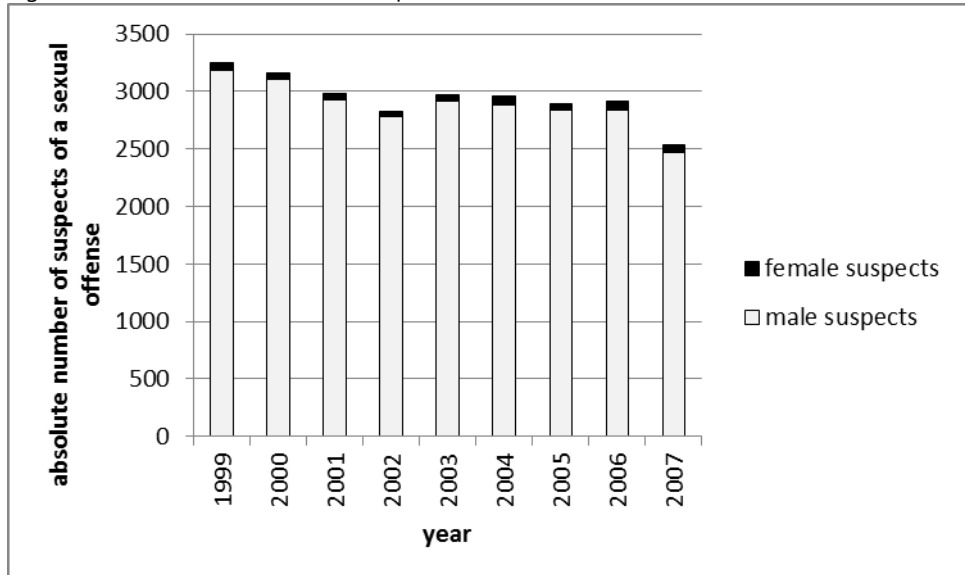
All in all we see a number of consistent patterns. The proportion of female sexual offenders as reported in victim surveys on domestic violence ranges between 0 and 7%. The proportion of female sexual perpetrators often appears to be higher for male victims (22.2-42.4%) than for female victims (1.3-1.5%). Thus, it appears that men when they are sexually abused, are more often victimized by female sexual offenders than women are. Dutch findings on the proportion of female sexual offenders are generally similar to findings from international research. According to the review by Cortoni and Hanson (2005), women are accountable for 4-5% of all sexual offenses which gives a male : female offender ratio of 20 : 1.

Although the proportion of offenders and the proportion of victims are not equivalent statistics (offenders can victimize more than victim, and victims can be abused by more than one offender), we may carefully deduce that for every 20 victims of a sexual offense one was sexually abused by a woman. This proportion is much lower than the 1,6:1 ratio reported by offenders of sexual coercion. In making this comparison we should keep in mind that the proportion of offenders is not the equivalent of the proportion of victims as offenders can victimize more than one person, and that sexual coercion is a much broader construct that includes hands-off sexual coercion as well.

1.3.3 Police-recorded suspects of a sexual offense

When a perpetrator enters the criminal justice system, she and her crime are recorded at several levels. First, a suspect and her case are registered by the police (section 1.3.3), after which the case may be sent to the prosecution service where it is then registered (section 1.3.4). When the prosecutor decides to bring the case in front of a judge, the case goes to court where a judge decides on the case (section 1.3.5). The number of persons questioned by the police in the Netherlands with regard to a sexual offense (after this: suspects) is depicted in figure 1.1. In 2007 the registration system used by the police and Statistics Netherlands underwent some changes , which have affected the numbers that are registered. This makes it difficult to compare the number of registrations before and after 2007, and therefore only data until 2007 is given. Figure 1.1 shows that adult female suspects comprise a small proportion of all suspects, varying between 1-3% over the years, resulting in a male: female ratio of 46:1.

Figure 1.1. Total number of adult suspects for hands-on sexual offenses



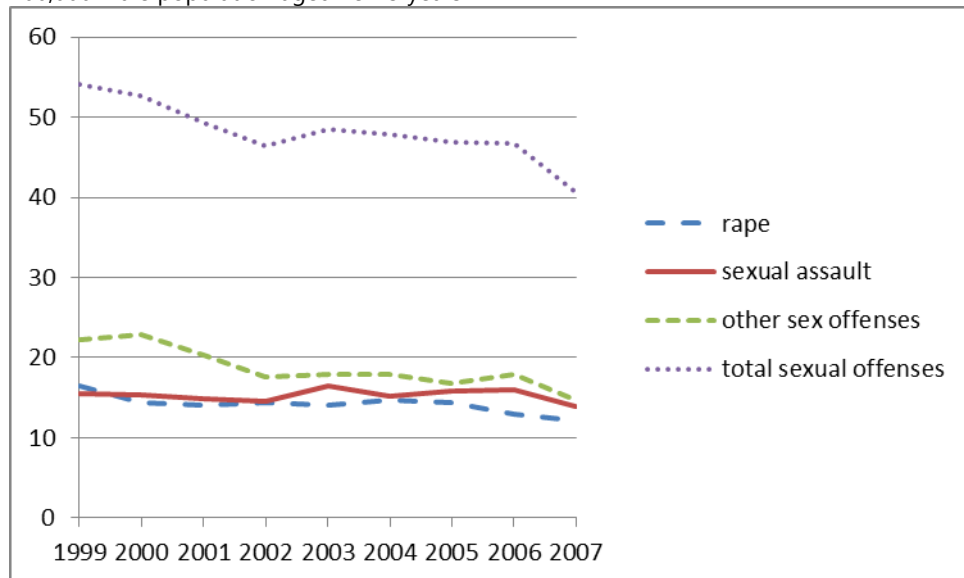
Source: CBS StatLine, 2009.

International research on criminal justice data has generated roughly the same patterns. Cortoni and Hanson (2005) conducted an extensive review on female sexual offending. They included five studies on officially reported sexual crimes which had been conducted in Canada, the USA, England and Wales, Australia and New Zealand. The type of sexual crime was broadly defined (hands-on and hands-off) and ranged from sexual offenses reported to police, persons arrested, persons found guilty and a census of inmates. The proportion of female sexual offenders in the studies varied between 0.6-8.3%, with an unweighted average of 3.8% for all sexual offenders.

In figure 1.2 male suspects per 100,000 male population aged 18-79 for the Netherlands for respectively rape, sexual assault and other hands-on sexual crimes are presented. This figure shows that the rates of men involved in rape (art. 242), sexual assault (art. 246) and 'other' hands-on sexual offenses (i.e. articles 247 and 249) are quite similar with men only slightly more often registered in the category 'other sexual offenses' than for rape or sexual assault. This last category contains the articles 243, 244, 245, 247, 249 and 250 which are as we saw earlier in table 1.1 offenses against children or will-deficient, unconscious, physically or mentally handicapped persons, or children under the perpetrator's care. Article 250, 'promoting lecherous acts', is not included in table 1.1 because it may be regarded as a hands-off offense. Because it is not possible to subdivide the category 'other sexual offenses' in the database Statline, which contains statistics as provided by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), we chose to include this article. A

previously conducted study on sexual offending also included article 250 in their definition of a pedosexual crime (Bijleveld, Meijer & Prins, 2000). Excluding the whole category "other sexual offenses" would entail disregarding an important category of sexual offending and thus a less attractive choice than including article 250. As far as we know, no prevalence rates on suspects or convictions for 'promoting lecherous acts' have been published.

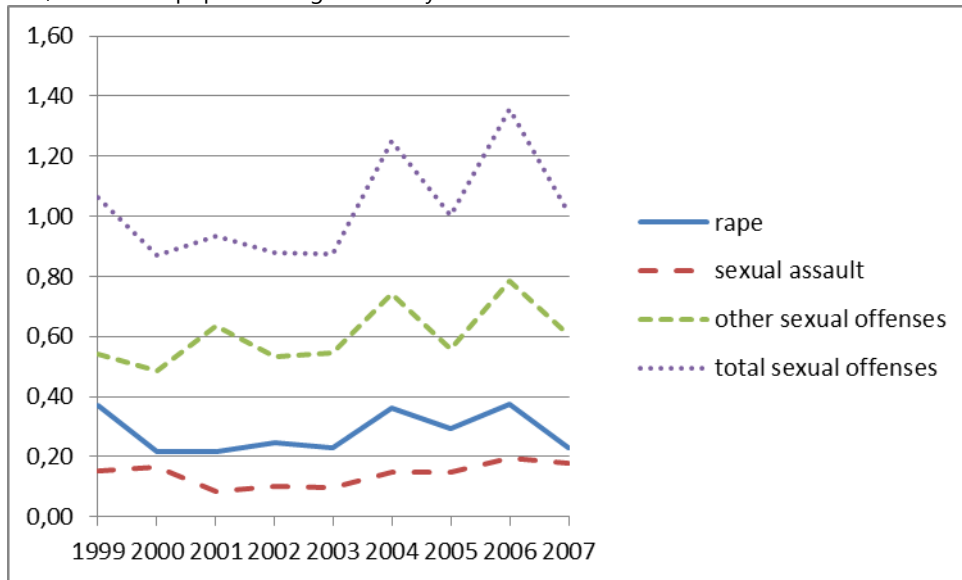
Figure 1.2. Yearly adult male suspects of rape, sexual assault and other sexual offenses per 100,000 male population aged 18-79 years



Source: CBS StatLine, 2009; CBS Statline, 2013a.

In figure 1.3 the numbers of female suspects per 100,000 female population aged 18-79 for rape, sexual assault and other hands-on sexual crimes are given.

Figure 1.3. Yearly adult female suspects of rape, sexual assault and other sexual offenses per 100,000 female population aged 18-79 years

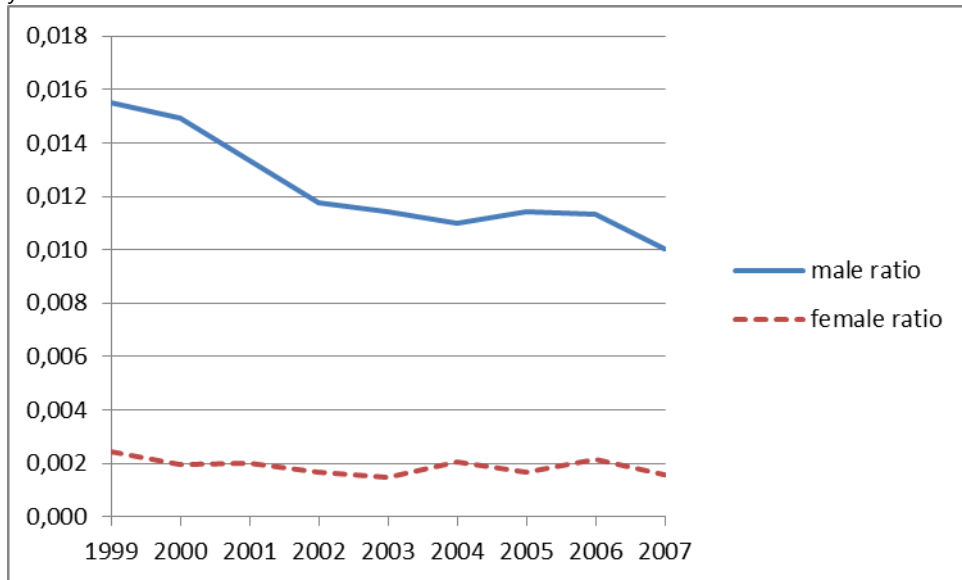


Source: CBS StatLine, 2009; CBS Statline, 2013a.

When adult female sexual suspects are compared with adult male sexual suspects, it is evident that when a female suspect is registered by the police she is relatively more often registered as a suspect of the offense category 'other sexual offenses' than a male suspect of a sexual offense. Because of the small numbers of adult female suspects, on average 60 suspects per year, we should be cautious to draw conclusions from this.

From figures 1.2 and 1.3 it appears as if the trends in male and female suspects of a sexual offense are mirrored: rates for men appear to go down and rates for women increase somewhat. Therefore, to investigate whether these trends are due to increases or decreases in the number of sexual offenders, or simply in the number of offenders of both genders, we divided the total numbers of adult suspects of a sexual offense by the total number of adult suspects for men and women. Figure 1.4 shows this result.

Figure 1.4. Adult suspects of a sexual offense divided by all adult suspects per gender, by year

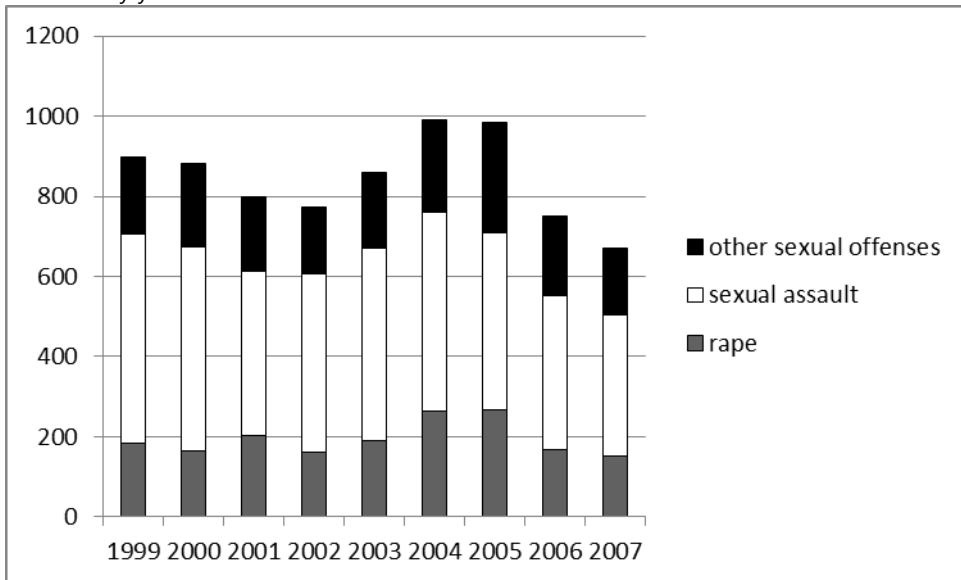


Source: CBS StatLine, 2009.

Figure 1.4 shows that indeed the number of male suspects of a sexual offense has been decreasing relatively since 1999. In 1999 1.6% of all male suspects are suspect of a sexual offense which decreases to 1% in 2007. This shows that over the years men are being relatively less often registered for a sexual offense by the police. However, the ratio of adult female suspects of a sexual offense to all female suspects shows no such decrease. This implies that any increase in the prevalence of female sexual offenders we saw in figure 1.3 is not due to increase in female sexual offending, but part of a general trend in increasing numbers of female suspects, and that a relatively small but stable percentage of the women is a suspect of a sexual offense.

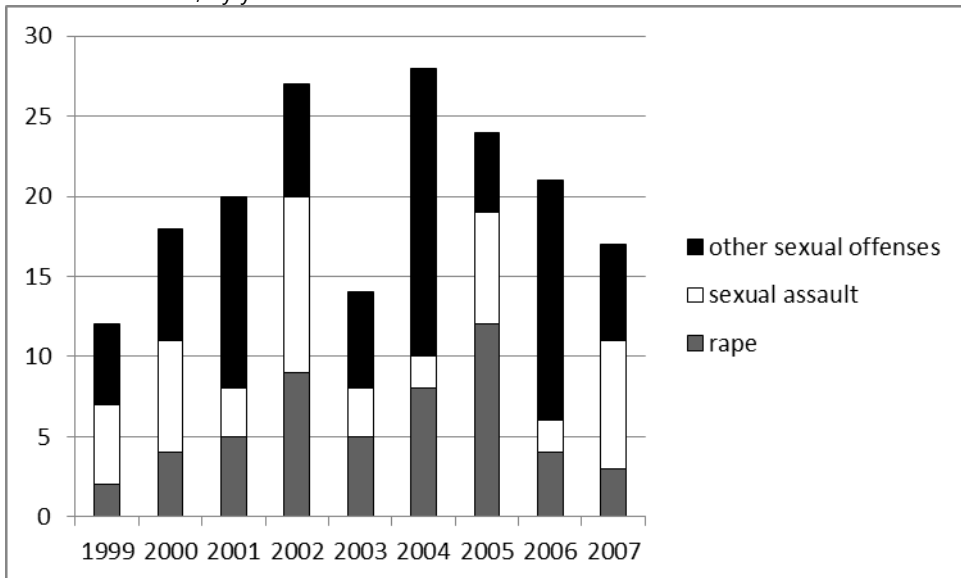
Next, the absolute numbers for juvenile male and female suspects of a sexual offense are shown in figure 1.5 and 1.6. These numbers are depicted in a cumulative bar graph and not in a line-diagram since the numbers on juvenile female sexual offenders are so small and jagged that a line-diagram would not give a readable presentation of the data. Figure 1.5 and 1.6 show an irregular pattern in juvenile male sexual suspects over a 9-year period, which is also the case for juvenile female sexual suspects. Juvenile males are over the years most often a suspect of sexual assault, while juvenile females are relatively more often a suspect of other sexual offenses.

Figure 1.5. Juvenile male suspects of rape, sexual assault and other sexual offenses, absolute numbers by year



Source: CBS StatLine, 2009

Figure 1.6. Juvenile female suspects of rape, sexual assault and other sexual offenses, absolute numbers, by year



Source: CBS StatLine, 2009

In summary we see that for adults as well as juveniles, female suspects of a sexual offense comprise a very small part of all suspects, both in statistics from the

Netherlands as well as in international research. For the Netherlands, over time, the relative as well as absolute numbers of adult male suspects of a sexual offense has decreased; while absolute numbers of adult female sexual offenders has increased slightly. As a percentage of all adult female suspects, female suspects of a sexual offense constitute a stable proportion.

When the results of the victim studies are compared with police records, it is clear that the male:female ratio has increased from 20:1 to 46:1. This shows that relatively fewer female sexual offenders are recorded by the police than expected on the basis of victim studies: the ratio has more than doubled.

1.3.4 Prosecutorial decisions and convictions

A proportion of all cases as recorded by the police is referred to the prosecutor. In table 1.3 the total number of registrations by the prosecutor is given for all groups of defendants for a hands-on sexual offense (articles 242-250), as well as their average percentages of technical and policy dismissals over the period 1999-2007. While we compare police and prosecution data, it should be noted that these may not correspond: firstly, the two sources measure sexual offenses at different levels (suspects versus cases) and secondly, cases registered in one year by the police may be transferred to the prosecution department in a later year.

Table 1.3. Absolute numbers and percentages of prosecutorial decisions for adult and juvenile suspects accused of a hands-on sexual offense (period 1999-2007).

	Number of police suspects	Number of registrations of cases by prosecutor	Average percentage technical dismissal of all registrations	Average percentage policy dismissal of all registrations
Adult males	25928	19455 (75%) ¹	4851 (25%)	1122 (6%)
Adult females	559	442 (79%)	174 (39%)	40 (9%)
Juvenile males	7610	5488 (72%)	748 (14%)	392 (7%)
Juvenile females	181	73 (40%)	16 (22%)	6 (8%)

Source: CBS StatLine, 2013b

A prosecutor in the Netherlands may dismiss a case because of policy reasons when for example the defendant has started therapy, has already paid damages to the victim or when the defendant had a small part in the offense. A technical

¹ Explanation of this percentage: 75% of the police suspects were registered by the prosecutor (19455/25928).

dismissal generally means that the prosecutor drops the case as he or she expects the case to end in acquittal, for instance because of insufficient evidence. Table 1.3 shows that adult female defendants' cases are relatively more often registered by the prosecutor, but relatively more often end in a technical dismissal than those of their male counterparts. Juvenile male defendants' cases are more often registered by the prosecutor, and juvenile female defendants' cases end more often in a technical dismissal. When these prosecutorial data are compared with the police data, we see that the male-female ratio for adults is approximately the same at 44:1.

1.3.5 Convictions

In table 1.4, average absolute numbers as well as percentages of acquittals and convictions over the period 1999-2007 are given for all groups of defendants. The percentages need not add up to 100%, because the judge can decide to pronounce other, less common verdicts, such as the inadmissibility of the prosecutor.

Table 1.4 . Absolute numbers and percentages of acquittals and convictions for adult and juvenile men and women concerning a hands-on sexual offense (period 1999-2007)

	Number of cases which were brought in front of a judge	Average percentage acquittal	Average percentage conviction
Males	10995 ² (57%) ³	1411 (13%)	9422 (86%)
Females	183 (42%)	26 (14%)	151 (82%)
Juvenile males	2855 (52%)	301 (11%)	2519 (88%)
Juvenile females	34 (47%)	5 (15%)	29 (85%)

Source: CBS StatLine, 2013b

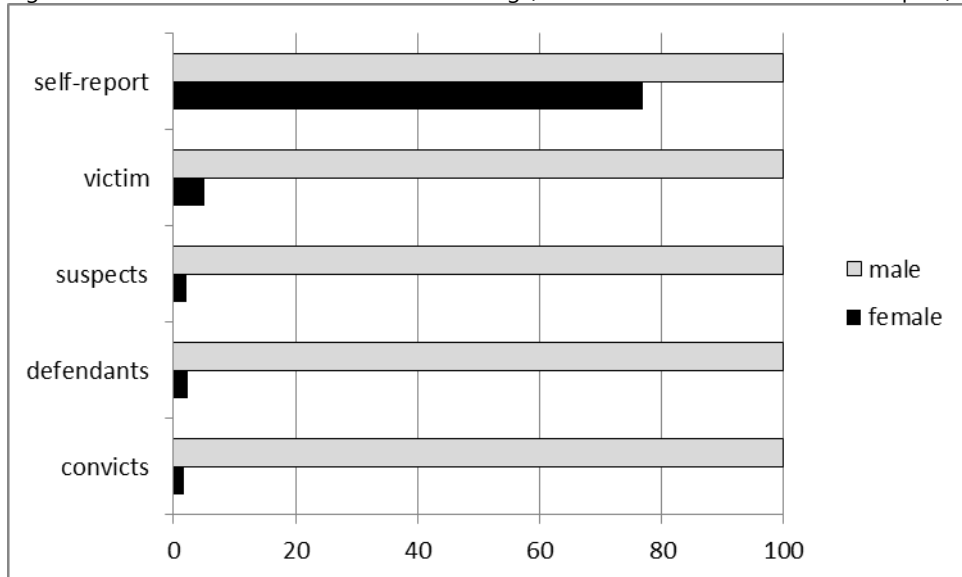
Although differences are small, table 1.4 shows that women's cases do tend to end in acquittal more often, and female defendants of a sexual offense are thus relatively less often convicted than male defendants. Differences between juveniles are slight. Comparing conviction data with prosecution data for adult male and female sexual offenders, we see that the male: female ratio has now increased to approximately 60:1.

² Explanation of this number: 19455 minus (4851+1122) (table 1.3) is not equal to 10995 because cases are often combined which results in less cases brought in front of a judge.

³ Explanation of this percentage: 57% of the cases which were registered by the prosecutor were brought in front of a judge.

The data sources which were discussed in section 1.3 and their corresponding male: female offender ratios are represented in figure 1.7.

Figure 1.7. Male: female ratio in sexual offending (includes sexual coercion for self-report)



Female respondents themselves report they have often sexually coerced someone to hands-on or hands-off sexual acts (the limitations of these data were discussed in section 1.3.2), and as their case progresses in the criminal justice system, more and more women in a sense 'drop out'. Once a judge has decided on their case, the male: female ratio increases to 60:1. We can see clearly that the proportion of female sexual offenders in the criminal justice system decreases from the police to the courts. The possible causes of this change in male: female offender ratio are discussed in the next section (1.3.6).

1.3.6 Difficulties in establishing prevalence of female sexual offending

As discussed briefly above establishing prevalence of (especially female) sexual offending is not an easy task. In this section these problems are described from a societal perspective, victim perspective and from a criminal justice perspective.

Societal perspective

Society traditionally expects women to be non-aggressive and to be nurturers (Saradjian, 2010). It expects men to feel and express sexual desire for women, and to be strong (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Researchers who studied female offenders of domestic violence suggested that the inattention to violent female offenders is related to the fact that traditional female role expectations regard a woman as a victim (Daly, 1992) and not someone who is capable of committing serious and violent crimes (Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003). Violent behavior by women is considered inappropriate and does not fit in with female role expectations. When women display behavior which is inconsistent with these societal expectations, this behavior may be denied, minimized or adjusted to existing social schema's (Saradjian, 2010). Even if this behavior is acknowledged as sexually abusing, people tend to minimize the damage of the abuse, or not to interpret the interaction of a (male) child victim with a female perpetrator as abuse (Anderson & Struckman-Johnson, 1998; Finkelhor, 1984, as cited by Saradjian, 2010). Also, studies have shown that it is generally held that male victims of a female perpetrator are harmed less than female victims of male perpetrators (Broussard, Wagner, & Kazelskis, 1991)

This traditional thinking also influences the extent to which people may be inclined to recognize it as such or intervene when sexual abuse by a female takes place. Women are permitted a much more liberal range of physical contact with their children than men: they usually bathe and dress their children and it is more accepted when they (and not their male partner) sleep together with their children. It is plausible that abuse committed in this context is not easily recognized as sexual abuse by family members and relatives, or by the victim (Banning, 1989; Ford, 2010).

Victim perspective

Such traditional role expectations may also result in victims less often reporting sexual victimization by female perpetrators (Anderson, 2005). Especially male victims may feel 'emasculated' having been victimized by the 'weaker sex', and may worry about the reaction of those around them. Men may be afraid they will not be regarded as 'real men' because real men are supposed to always want sex and to always enjoy it (the 'this would not happen to a real man' – cliché) (Faller, 1987).

Furthermore, when a man is victimized, he is expected not to be upset or affected and it is not appropriate for him to show his emotions (Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012); this may also serve as a barrier to reporting the crime to the police. Female victims may be afraid that people will question their sexual orientation: similar fears were reported by male victims of sexual abuse who have been abused by a male perpetrator (Alaggia, 2005).

General reasons of adult victims for not reporting sexual victimization are blaming themselves for being raped/assaulted, fear of repeat victimization when the victim knows the offender, regarding the offense as minor, or a belief that reporting the crime would not make a difference (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). It is to be doubted if such inhibitions play a similar role for child victims. Reasons of children for not reporting are relatively unknown because most victim studies do not involve child respondents: the Statistics Netherlands survey interviews respondents from age 15, and the NCVS has respondents from age 12. Reasons why child victims probably do not report their victimization to the police could be unwillingness to acknowledge the abuse (especially when they are abused by parents or family members), children may be too young to remember the abuse, children are not able to express themselves because they are not able to talk yet or to realize that what happened to them constitutes sexual abuse (Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996). Crime reporting percentages are related to the type of crime. Results from the US National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) showed that sexual assault and rape are the most underreported violent crimes (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013).

Many of the reasons mentioned above for not reporting sexual victimization apply to all perpetrators and are not unique for female sexual perpetrators. Peterson, Colebank and Motta (2001), as cited by Saradijan (2010), reported however that when a female has co-offended with a male, the victim may only report the abuse by the male and not sexual victimization by the female offender. Since female sexual offenders may relatively more often victimize children (see section 1.4), and as children are not interviewed in victim studies, victim studies may also be underreporting sexual victimization by a female more than sexual victimization by males.

Criminal justice perspective

The quotes with which this chapter started are an illustration of traditional role expectations, as further elaborated above. Research conducted by Denov and Roberts (2001) and Denov (2004b) showed that psychiatrists and police officers viewed sexual abuse by women as less harmful than sexual abuse by men. Bunting (2007) reported that her respondents (professionals working with risk assessment

tools and female sexual offenders) were reluctant to accept that a woman could play an active role in sexual abuse or could even initiate it.

In summary we see that for female perpetrators it is probably easier to hide sexual abuse in caregiving situations than for male perpetrators. Females have more and easier access to (young) children, their acts may often not be recognized as sexual abuse and when their acts are perceived as abuse they may be played down. From the victim perspective, we see that victims may be ashamed and afraid that those around them and the police will not believe that they have been victimized by a female. Female victims may fear they are lesbian or that they will become lesbian because they have been assaulted by another female. Male victims may fear that they are perceived as 'not a real man', and that once they have been victimized it is inappropriate and unmanly to show their emotions. Lastly, police officers and criminal justice practitioners are reluctant to accept that women can be sexual offenders.

From the above section we conclude the following. Female respondents, especially younger respondents, report about half to two-thirds as often as men that they have sexually coerced someone. However, as sexual offending cases progress through the criminal justice system, more and more women 'drop out', ending in a male: female ratio of 60:1 in court. Police data indicate that female sexual offenders more often victimize younger victims, and according to victim studies men are more often victimized by females than women. Adult women's cases are dismissed and acquitted more often than men's cases. All in all, female sexual offending is much rarer than male sexual offending, but female sexual offenders appear to have even smaller chances of being apprehended and convicted.

1.4 Prior research on sexual offenders

In this section, we will first describe what is known about the background- and offense characteristics of adult and juvenile female sexual offenders. After this, female sexual offenders are compared with male sexual offenders on heterogeneity, criminal career development and co-offending processes.

1.4.1 Background factors and offense characteristics of female sexual offenders

Only a small number of studies have been conducted on female sexual offending. Sample sizes of studies, while generally small, have a broad range varying from 11 (Green & Kaplan, 1994) to 471 women (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). They also vary in sample composition in the sense that they consist of women who were charged or

arrested for their sexual offense (Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Vandiver, 2006), registered (Sandler & Freeman, 2007) and convicted (Strickland, 2008), who were in a treatment facility (Faller, 1995), or a combination of these (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989; McCarty, 1986; Peter, 2008). Some studies combined juvenile and adult female sexual offenders (Faller, 1987; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000; Tardif, Auclair, Jacob, & Carpentier, 2005). The number of studies conducted on female sexual offenders in the Netherlands is limited to a case study (Korfage & De Hoop, 2006) and a clinical study (Muskens, Bogaerts, van Casteren, & Labrijn, 2011).

Adult female sexual offenders: Offender characteristics

Overall, the majority (>60%) of the offenders are reported to be Caucasian (Bader, Scalora, Casady, & Black, 2008; Faller, 1995). Some studies reported intellectual problems in offenders like borderline cognitive functioning (Faller, 1987; Lewis & Stanley, 2000) and a history of sustained low school performance (Mathews et al., 1991; Travin, Cullen, & Porter, 1990); others reported average intellectual capacities (IQ>90) (Turner, Miller, & Henderson, 2008).

A few studies mentioned high prevalence of disorders (>37%) (Fazel, Sjöstedt, Grann, & Långström, 2010; Strickland, 2008): depression and suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorders, cognitive disorders, but also personality disorders (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Faller, 1995; Kaplan & Green, 1995; Mathews et al., 1991). Substance abuse (alcohol and/or drugs) prevalence varied from 13-55% (Faller, 1987; Mathews et al., 1989). Faller (1995) reported that over a third of adult female sexual offenders are married; other studies have reported lower rates (Kaplan & Green, 1995; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000).

Adult female sexual offenders: Childhood experiences

The vast majority of female sexual offenders are found to have had a problematic youth with physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and alcohol abuse by parent(s) (Bumby & Bumby, 1997). Victimization rates varied widely. Sexual victimization ranged from 48-100% (Faller, 1987; Mathews et al., 1989) and physical abuse varied from 35-93% (Allen, 1991; Mathews et al., 1989). In one study the majority of the married offenders (85%) reported getting married as a teenager to escape the family home (McCarthy, 1986). Female sexual offenders are in some studies described as socially isolated, having few or no friends, not feeling at home anywhere, or originating from broken and dysfunctional families (Mathews et al., 1991; McCarthy, 1986; Travin et al., 1990).

Adult female sexual offenders: Victim and offense characteristics

The average age of the women at the time of commission of the sexual offense is generally around 30 years (Ferguson & Meehan, 2005; Nathan & Ward, 2002). Some studies reported that women had more than one victim, and that these victims were not older than 11 years (pre-pubertal) (Bader et al., 2008; Faller, 1995; Johnson, 1989; Nathan & Ward, 2002; Turner, Miller, & Henderson, 2008). In the majority of cases (>70%), victim(s) of female sexual offenders are relatives or acquaintances. The sexual acts that occur during the abuse comprise the entire range of sexual abuse, from genital fondling, oral sex to sexual penetration (Mathews et al., 1991; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Vandiver & Walker, 2002).

Mixed findings were reported on the gender of the victim, some studies reported a majority of male victims (Freeman & Sandler, 2008), while others reported more female victims (Nathan & Ward, 2002). Findings on co-offenders were reported by a few studies. In the study by Fehrenbach and Monastersky (1988) no co-offenders were reported, while other studies reported co-offending rates of 25% (Bader et al., 2008), 34% (McCarty, 1986), 68% (Faller, 1995) and 75% (Nathan & Ward, 2002). The co-offender was usually a man, often the female sexual offender's intimate partner (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Faller, 1987; Lewis & Stanley, 2000).

In summary, it appears that the average adult female sexual offender as portrayed by previous studies is traumatized, often has mental disorders, is socially isolated and performs moderately intellectually. The high prevalence of sexual abuse victimization is prominent, in addition to physical abuse and neglect. Victims are generally known to the offender.

Juvenile female sexual offenders

When we focus on juvenile female sexual offenders, existing research is even scarcer. According to a literature review conducted by Frey (2010) juvenile female sexual offenders show similar problems as adult female sexual offenders. Families are characterized by moderate to severe dysfunction (Mathews, Hunter, & Vuz, 1997; Tardif et al., 2005) with many (>25%) shifts of caregivers (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008) and inconsistent parenting (82%) (Hickey, McCrory, Farmer, & Vizard, 2008). Sexual victimization varies from 26% (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008), to 50% (Fehrenbach & Monastersky, 1988), to 100% (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Hunter et al., 1993; Mathews et al., 1997). Physical abuse and neglect ranges from 12% (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008) to 91% (Hickey et al., 2008). Hickey et al. (2008) reported that 77% of the juvenile females in their sample had experienced insufficient sexual boundaries within their family, and that 49% had undergone treatment for mental health problems. Roe-Sepowitz et al (2008) reported in their extensive study that

almost 30% of the females abused alcohol and/or used drugs, 49% experienced problems at school and 53% reported prior delinquency before their sexual offense.

Because the majority of the studies is clinical, and consists of case studies or descriptions of a limited number of young women, offense characteristics are often lacking. Some studies reported predominantly male victims (Hunter et al., 1993; Mathews et al., 1997) while others reported mainly female victims (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2006a; Vandiver & Teske Jr, 2006). Most studies reported victims aged on average 11-12 years, and victims and offender were mostly known to each other (Frey, 2010). A few researchers studied sexual co-offending of males as well as females. Vandiver (2010) reported that about 50% of the juvenile females in her sample acted with a co-offender, while Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006) reported 70% co-offending. McCartan et al (2010) reported 14% co-offending. For all studies it was unclear whether this co-offender was a romantic partner of the female offender or a friend or peer.

All in all, we see that juvenile female sexual offenders for an important part resemble their adult counterparts: also juvenile female sexual offenders are characterized by multiple traumas like sexual and physical abuse and neglect. Problems in domains like school, anti-social behavior and delinquency are relatively often reported.

1.4.2 Heterogeneity of female sexual offenders

Sexual offenders are often regarded as a heterogeneous group. Research indicates differences between offenders across a range of factors. A number of authors have attempted to classify female sexual offenders into distinct groups with distinct typologies. One of the most often used classifications in (male) sexual offender research is the typology of rapists and child molesters. Other distinctions have been made such as between adult and juvenile offenders, hands-on and cyber offenses, and classifications based on criminal career characteristics like specialization and age of onset. The typologies of adult female sexual offenders based on their victim preference and offense characteristics are discussed in this section; classifications based on criminal career parameters will be discussed in 1.4.3.

Adult female sexual offenders

Several authors have identified subtypes within the group of female sexual offenders. A more extensive review of these typologies is given in chapter 2. The typologies that have been developed on female sexual offenders are mainly descriptive rather than explanatory. Typologies describing female sexual offenders can be divided in two types. First, typologies which are developed by using

quantitative techniques like cluster analysis in which a small number of quantitative variables such as gender and age of the victim, criminal career features, and the presence of a co-offender are combined (Sandler & Freeman, 2007; Vandiver, 2006; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). These studies often use a large sample of offenders. Vandiver and Kercher (2004), with a sample of 471 female sexual offenders, distinguished six types. They mainly used information about the nature of the sexual offenses, the sex and age of the victim and the age and criminal career of the offender. Sandler and Freeman (2007) also used a large sample (N=390). However, they could only partially reproduce the typology of Vandiver and Kercher, and found other subtypes, which nevertheless differed only marginally on criminal career aspects from the Vandiver and Kercher subtypes.

Second, more qualitative typologies have been developed using interviews with offenders, or by analyzing treatment reports (Green & Kaplan, 1994; Mathews et al., 1989). The typology of Mathews et al. (1991) is the one most often referred to in the literature as it has the richest dataset. The authors used extensive information on 16 female sexual offenders who had been assessed in a treatment facility. They clustered the women into groups in a qualitative manner, identifying three types of female sexual offenders (in order of size of the groups). First the *teacher-lover type*, a woman who abuses an adolescent but denies the abuse and expresses that she has a love affair with the victim. Second the *intergenerationally predisposed type*, a woman with a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, who on her own abuses her own child or a child acquaintance. And finally the *male-coerced type*, a dependent woman, who has experienced sexual abuse herself, who (under duress) participates in the abuse of a child or children, initiated by her husband or intimate partner.

Juvenile female sexual offenders

For juvenile female sexual offenders, Mathews, Hunter and Vuz (1997) developed a provisional typology (N= 67). This typology was based on a clinical sample and all offenders were solo-offenders. Three subtypes were outlined: first, a group of juvenile females who had abused young children during baby-sitting situations. The second subtype of offenders projected their own experiences of sexual abuse onto their brothers/sisters or peers, the so-called intergenerational transmission: victim becomes an offender (Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; Higgs, Canavan, & Meyer III, 1992). The third subtype consisted of more severely disordered offenders, showing high levels of trauma, individual and family psychopathology and dysfunction, and a childhood with severe abuse and neglect.

1.4.3 Criminal career development of adult female sexual offenders

Re-offending patterns of female sexual offenders were studied in a meta-analysis by Cortoni, Hanson and Coache (2010). Their study used data on 2,490 female sexual offenders all of whom had entered the criminal justice system. These data covered offenders from Australia, Canada, England, the Netherlands (including a number of the offenders studied in this thesis), and the US. Over a follow-up period of 5.9 years, sexual recidivism was 1.3 %, violent recidivism 4.3 %, and general recidivism 19.5%. Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2009) reported in their meta-analysis for males (29,450 sexual offenders) recidivism rates of 14% for sexual offenses, 14% for violent offenses and a little over 36% for general offenses. The average follow-up period was 5.8 years. Thus, it appears that particularly for sexual offenses, female sexual offenders' recidivism rates are lower than those of male sexual offenders. As far as we are aware, studies which examined criminal career parameters like onset, desistance, duration and specialization in female sexual offenders have not been conducted yet.

1.4.4 Co-offending and group processes in juvenile female sexual offenders

Finally, one under-researched area for juvenile female sexual offending is its group nature (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Harkins & Dixon, 2009). In general, the majority of all offenses as committed by juveniles are committed within a group consisting of at least two offenders (Warr, 2002).

As far as we are aware, only Vandiver (2010) has conducted a study on co-offending patterns of juvenile female sexual arrestees. She found that 49% of the juvenile females in her study had a co-offender, which was significantly higher than for male juvenile sexual offenders (19%). Characteristics about personality, family background, motives for the offense and for co-offending were not given in this study. From male juvenile sexual group offenders it is known that, when compared with male juvenile sexual solo-offenders, who regard the victim more in terms of satisfying their sexual or relationship needs, group offenders are more likely to view victims as targets for behavior that benefit their status in the group (Hauffe & Porter, 2009). Group bonding and elevation of masculinity has been reported by several researchers, as well as excitement and adventure as motives (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003, Bijleveld et al., 2007, Harkins & Dixon, 2009).

1.5 Design of this thesis

1.5.1 Data collection⁴

The starting point of the data used in this thesis is the records from the prosecution office of the Netherlands from the beginning of the digitalizing of the prosecution registration system (1993). Although this prosecutorial registration system is not developed for scientific research, it is a (virtually) complete registration of all cases registered within the prosecution service in the Netherlands. As it is a national system, it contains all registered cases with the Netherlands central prosecution service. The system is case-based, meaning that each registration entails for one defendant at least one criminal offense (but more offenses in a case are possible).

Concerning the adult females, we found information on 672 cases registered between 1994 and 2005, entailing adult female defendants of at least one sexual offense. Of these 672 registered cases, 598 cases could be linked to a criminal record by using the centralized system of the Netherlands Judicial Information service where all criminal records are digitally stored. A criminal record file contains all offenses ever registered by the Prosecution Service for a person, starting at age 12, the age of criminal responsibility in the Netherlands. When someone dies or reaches the age of 80, the file is cleared. When a person has (temporarily) lived abroad, the file can contain registrations of crimes committed in that country.

We removed from this dataset those cases for which we may not be certain that suspects committed the sexual offense: cases that were acquitted or cases that the prosecutor dismissed for technical reasons (mostly due to problems with evidence). Ten percent of the 598 cases ended in acquittal and for 33% the prosecution was dropped for technical reasons.

The remaining cases could be linked to 337 unique female sexual offenders. Of these, 209 women had only been registered for hands-off offenses like human trafficking. We continued with 128 adult females who were registered for at least one hands-on sexual offense. For all women we retrieved the respective court file. These were missing in 17 cases so that ultimately we were able to analyze both court files and criminal records for 111 female hands-on sexual offenders.

From the court files, offender and offense variables were scored. Court files in the Netherlands always contain the charge as well as the judicial decision, in

⁴ The data were supplied to the author by the WODC, Ministry of Safety and Justice. WODC cannot be held responsible for the completeness, correctness, and the use of the data.

which it is specified what offense(s) the defendant was charged with and, in case of a court verdict, found guilty of. Almost every court file contains transcripts of the police hearings of the offender, reports by each involved police officer of his or her findings at each step of the case, together with victim and sometimes witness statements. This combined sample of court files with criminal records was used for the study in chapter 2.

For the second study (chapter 3) the sample's complete criminal records were used. For 7 cases the final sentence had been changed between the time when the first and second study had been carried out, so the final sample consisted of 135 offenders instead of the 128 adult females who had been registered for a hands-on sexual offense in the first study.

For the third study on juvenile female sexual offenders (chapter 4) we used the same strategy for compiling a data set as was used with the first and second study on adult female sexual offenders. We started out with information on 143 cases registered between 1993 and 2008 with the Netherlands central prosecution service entailing a juvenile female defendant of at least one sexual offense. Of these 143 recorded cases, 129 cases could be linked to a unique defendant criminal record file. Of these 129 defendants, 13 had seen their case acquitted and 22 had seen it dismissed by the prosecutor for technical reasons, so these 35 women were not included in the sample. This resulted in 94 unique juvenile female sexual offenders. Some of these (N=26) were hands-off offenders only. The final research group contains 68 juvenile females who had been prosecuted for at least one hands-on sexual offense. Two court files turned out to have been already cleared, so we had ultimately complete information on 66 juvenile female sexual offenders.

For the fourth study on group sexual offending by juvenile female offenders (chapter 5) the same sample was used as described for chapter 4. The majority of this group, 38 juvenile females (58%), had committed one or more sexual offenses with other offenders. The final sample consisted of those 38 juvenile females who had sexually offended in an offender group (two or more offenders). An overview of data sources and collection is presented in table 1.5.

Table 1.5. Overview of data collection

	Chapter 2 (adult offenders)	Chapter 3 (adult offenders)	Chapter 4 (juvenile offenders)	Chapter 5 (juvenile offenders)
Cases from prosecution office	672	672	143	143
# unique cases linked with criminal record	598	598	129	129
# offenders convicted for any sexual offense	337	337	94	94
# offenders convicted for hands-on sexual offense	128	135	68	68
# offenders with retrievable court-file	111	111	66	subgroup of group offenders: 38

Our data collection strategy is in line with prevailing methods in the Netherlands and demonstrates that we have selected those females as sample members who were regarded by either the prosecutor or the judge as a female sexual offender.

1.5.2 Overcoming existing limitations

As shown in section 1.4, many studies have limitations in some aspects: either they have a small sample, consisting of 20 or less women - in which case there is rich data available about these women (Green & Kaplan, 1994; Mathews et al., 1989), or their sample is large - but the background information is limited (Ferguson & Meehan, 2005; Freeman & Sandler, 2008; Miller, Turner, & Henderson, 2009; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). In the studies based on small samples, stability and interpretability of the models is problematic. No studies are available with both an appropriate sample size and rich data. Studies using clinical samples, that are often also small, suffer from generalizability issues and may overestimate victimization and mental health problems in offenders (Matthews, Mathews, & Speltz, 1991). Studies that do employ appropriate sample sizes are generally more generalizable but generate less understanding of the offending process and underlying problems in the offenders (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004)

The third limitation is that samples often include police registrations/suspects/arrestees to increase the sample size (Lewis & Stanley, 2000). Especially in sex offending research it may be risky to include suspects since it is generally known that sex offending charges often do not stand up in court. As shown in section 1.3 many cases end in a technical dismissal (16-46%) or an

acquittal (10-16%). These Dutch rates seem high when compared with an US meta-analysis on criminal justice decisions concerning child sexual abuse, where 12% of the cases ended in a dismissal and only 3% of the cases ended in an acquittal (Cross, Walsh, Simone, & Jones, 2003). It is generally problematic to compare legal outcomes for countries with different legal systems: e.g. it is not clear what the impact of plea-bargaining is on these low rates. Nevertheless, including convicted offenders will likely increase validity in the sense that we may be more confident that the sample members actually committed the sexual offense. Furthermore, arrestees do not have a court file, in contrast with convicted offenders. Including convicted offenders will therefore also increase the possibility of obtaining more rich and valuable information.

The fourth limitation is that hands-off offenders are often included in samples. (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). The inclusion of hands-off offenses may complicate studies: the backgrounds, motives and offense characteristics of women who are convicted for crimes such as prostitution (which by itself is not a crime in the Netherlands) or human trafficking is likely explained by quite different factors. Separate analysis of hands-on and hands-off offending is therefore warranted.

The fifth limitation is that some studies combines juvenile and adult female sexual offenders (Faller, 1987; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000; Tardif et al., 2005). Juvenile female sexual offenders experience maturation at a different cognitive, emotional and social level (Hunter, Becker, & Lexier, 2006) than their adult counterparts who are mostly in a different life stage. Both groups are dealing with different life experiences that influence their behavior and their offending process. Studying adult and juvenile female sexual offenders in one explanatory framework therefore appears ill-advised, which is the reason they are studied separately in this thesis.

The sixth limitation is that almost all studies focus on females who sexually abuse children, perhaps based on the assumption that children are the predominant victims of female sexual offenders (Tewksbury, 2004), and neglect the possibility of female offenders victimizing peer victims or adult victims. By focusing only on female child sexual offenders a substantial number of female sexual offenders are neglected. Again this is a reason to study these groups together.

The seventh and last limitation is that the development of the criminal career of female sexual offenders has been rarely studied. Only recidivism studies have been conducted, with no studies on other criminal career parameters like onset, crime mix, desistance and specialization.

The studies reported in this thesis improve on all these seven issues. First, a fairly large sample of offenders is studied. Even though in an absolute sense it is not huge, it constitutes in a statistical sense the entire population of female hands-on sexual offenders known to the Netherlands criminal justice system in the

years studied. Life course criminal record data are combined with court files concerning the hands-on sexual offenses. By using a sample of convicted offenders we run less risk of overestimating the problems found in female sexual offenders (which would almost certainly occur when using for instance a clinical sample). Only hands-on offenders are included in our research samples. We include all cases and all victims of female sexual offenders, and not solely child victims.

Two samples of female sexual offenders will be separately analyzed, one sample consisting of adult females and one sample consisting of juvenile females. For both groups, models on heterogeneity are studied to examine variation and patterns in background and offense characteristics.

We have explicitly chosen not to study the criminal career development of juvenile female sexual offenders. At the time of the sampling offense these offenders were in adolescence and their criminal career and follow-up period are therefore very short. The merits of conducting a study on re-offending, and analyzing their criminal career development is therefore questionable. Instead of this, we have decided to study the co-offending patterns of this juvenile group.

1.6 Outline of this thesis

The main aim of this study is to describe characteristics and heterogeneity of (juvenile) female sexual offenders. The thesis starts in chapter two with a detailed examination of the research group of adult female sexual offenders, their victims, and the characteristics of the sexual offense they were prosecuted for. Next, those who offended alone are compared with those who offended with a co-perpetrator. Lastly, we examine whether subtypes can be identified in our research group and to what extent these correspond with extant typologies.

Analyzing the offenders' criminal records in chapter three we investigate the extent to which adult female sexual offenders have committed other sexual, violent and general offenses. These analyses are carried out for all adult female sexual offenders who were registered for any hands-on sexual offense in the Netherlands. After this we analyzed to what extent adult female sexual offenders specialize in sexual offending or whether they can be characterized as generalists. Finally we studied whether specialization and generalistic offending patterns are associated with personal and offense characteristics.

Chapter four studies the second part of our research group, juvenile female sexual offenders. In this chapter their motives, victims, and offense characteristics are studied. Secondly, we investigate heterogeneity in juvenile female sexual offenders. To do so, subgroups or subtypes that emerge from our analysis are described, and it is investigated to what extent these subgroups differ on background and offense characteristics.

In chapter five the focus is on juvenile females who committed their sexual offense in a group. Almost all studies on juvenile female sexual offenders reported that the young women in their samples generally acted alone, or did not report on co-offending. This study describes how offenders interact with each other and with the victim (before, during and after the actual offense), and identifies themes and motives for group sexual offending.

The thesis ends with a conclusion and discussion, and recommendations for policy and research.

Chapter 2 'Women don't do such things!' Female sex offenders: Characteristics and offender typologies⁵

We studied offender, offense, and victim characteristics in a cohort of 111 adult female sex offenders, comprising all female sex offenders known to the criminal justice authorities in the Netherlands between 1994-2005. In 77% of cases, the female sex offenders had abused children; almost two thirds of the women had co-offended with a male co-offender. Their backgrounds are on average problematic with sexual abuse prominent (31%), as well as mental disorders (59%). Using multiple correspondence analysis, we distinguished four prototypical offender types. We identified the young assaulter and the rapist who are relatively young solo-offenders. Two prototypes, the psychologically disturbed co-offender and the passive mother, are older women. They mostly abused their own children together with their male/intimate partner. These prototypes partly overlap with previous typologies. We discuss implications for theory and treatment.

⁵ This chapter was published as:

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2.1 Introduction

Sex offending is generally regarded as a typically male phenomenon. The academic literature on sex offending is almost exclusively on male sex offending, prompting some to state that in academic research female perpetrators of sex offenses are ignored (Grayston & De Luca, 1999).

As an explanation for this, it is said firstly that the number of adult female sex offenders is too small to justify research (Finkelhor, 1984; Johnson & Shrier, 1987). Internationally, female sex offenders are said to comprise about 5% of all sex offenders (Cortoni, 2009). Adult female sex offenders in the Netherlands, the country where this study took place, are responsible for less than 1% of all prosecuted hands-on sex offending cases. Secondly, it is reported that sexual abuse by females is mostly hidden in child caring practices such as bathing, dressing and changing diapers (Allen, 1991; Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Kaplan & Green, 1995). Because of this, the abuse by females will also be less easily detectable when compared with abuse committed by men. Thirdly, it is supposed that victims would feel ashamed about what happened, and reluctant to report the offense to the police for two reasons: firstly because both male and female victims would be fearful that officials would not believe their story ('women don't do such things') and secondly because male victims are afraid they would not be regarded as 'real men' (the 'this would not happen to a real man' – cliché) (Faller, 1987; Sarrel & Masters, 1982).

However, the scarcity of female sexual offending does not mean that female sex offenders are irrelevant to study. Sexual offending can have a grave impact on victims, and this impact may be different when the offender is female. While the number of offenders may be small, studying motives, *modus operandi* and possible mental disorders is still necessary to be able to intervene successfully. More knowledge on female sexual offending may, finally, help victims to report and seek aid.

The few studies that have looked at the limited group of female sex offenders suffered because of smaller sample size even more than studies on male sex offenders, from the fact that the perpetrators are a heterogeneous group as also women commit sexual offenses out of widely different motives and in different contexts (Vandiver & Walker, 2002).

Previous studies have attempted to study the variation in offense context, offending patterns and victim characteristics by developing typologies about female sex offenders. However, these typologies (e.g. Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Sandler & Freeman, 2007) are either based on large samples but with features which tells us little about the *modus operandi*, the background characteristics and mental problems of the offenders and the victim - or based on rich and in-depth

information (e.g. Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1991; Faller, 1995) but based on small, clinical samples making the results ungeneralizable.

Our study adds to the literature of previous typology-studies in that we study a relatively large, non-clinical group of offenders, and that we at the same time have rich and validated information about the offenders and their offenses.

In the following we first give an overview of the extant literature on female sex offenders. Almost all other studies that we were able to trace were carried out in the U.S.A. or Canada. There were some studies from England, one from Germany and one from Australia. For the Netherlands, the country in which the study we report on took place, Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006) and Hendriks and Slotboom (2007) investigated adolescent females who committed sex offenses. Korfage and De Hoop (2006) presented a single case study of the treatment of an adult female sex offender. There are no other known studies in the Netherlands about adult female sex offenders.

Next, we describe our research group of female perpetrators of sexual abuse, their victims, and the characteristics of the offense. The group we studied is comprised of all adult female sex offenders registered for prosecution with the Netherlands criminal justice authorities between 1994-2005. As such it constitutes the population of all known adult female sex offenders in the Netherlands in that period. Next, we compare those who had offended alone with those who had offended with a co-perpetrator. Lastly, we examine whether subtypes can be identified in our research group and to what extent these correspond with extant typologies.

Our research questions are therefore as follows:

- What are the characteristics of female sex offenders, their offenses and their victims?
- Are there any differences in characteristics between solo-offenders and co-offenders?
- Can subtypes of female sex offenders be distinguished?

2.1.1 Prevalence of female sex offending

Green (1999) reported that victim surveys show that between 14 and 24% of sexually abused males and between 6 and 14% of sexually abused females report having been abused by a female perpetrator. Bumby and Bumby (1997) reported even higher rates fluctuating between 2 and 78%, which they explained by the very different types of research incorporated. Thus, the literature shows widely varying prevalence rates about the proportion of sex offenses committed by women.

2.1.2 Perpetrator characteristics

The limited research suggests that the average age of female sex offenders is between 26 and 32 years (Faller, 1995; Vandiver & Walker, 2002; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). Most female perpetrators (85 percent) are Caucasian (Allen, 1991; Faller, 1995; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). Faller (1995) reported that over a third is married; other studies have reported lower rates (Kaplan & Green, 1995; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000). Almost all married offenders (85%) reported getting married as a teenager to escape the family home (McCarthy, 1986). Another feature of female sex offenders is alcohol and/or drugs problems starting in early adolescence (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Faller, 1995; Mathews et al., 1991).

The studies reported mixed findings as regards IQ: some researchers reported average levels at 95-100 (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; McCarthy, 1986), while others reported lower intelligence and a history of sustained low school performance (Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Mathews et al., 1991; Travin, Cullen, & Protter, 1990). Over 40% of female sex offenders are reported as unemployed or having an unstable working history (Faller, 1987; Green, 1999), the often poorly paid jobs of these women being a result of their low education.

The vast majority of female sex offenders have had a problematic youth with physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and alcohol abuse by the parent(s) (Bumby & Bumby, 1997). They have also experienced negative parenting styles, such as negative interaction between the mother and the child, being frequently criticised by a parent and they may have developed the feeling of being worthless as a human being (Allen, 1991). Female sex offenders are usually (> 60%) from broken and dysfunctional families. They are generally described as socially isolated, have few or no friends and feel they are nowhere at home (Mathews et al., 1991; McCarthy, 1986; Travin et al., 1990).

Depression and suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorders, cognitive disorders, but also personality disorders are reported (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Faller, 1995; Kaplan & Green, 1995; Mathews et al., 1991). In recent research psychotic disorders are rarely reported (Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Vandiver & Walker, 2002), although in older research psychoses were seen as a distinctive feature of female sex offenders (Herman & Hirschman, 1981).

All studies report that a majority (60-100%) of the female offenders have been sexually abused in their youth (Green & Kaplan, 1994; Mathews et al., 1991; McCarty, 1986). A substantial part (percentages range from over 50 to 95%) of the women also experienced physical (non-sexual) abuse (Allen, 1991; Kaplan & Green 1995; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000). Lewis and Stanley (2000) reported that 80% of female sex offenders experienced physical abuse later in life by a male sexual partner or have been threatened with it.

In summary, it seems that the average adult female sex offender as portrayed in the literature is traumatised, often coupled with mental disorders, is socially isolated and performs moderately at school and in employment. The high prevalence of sexual abuse victimization is prominent, in addition to physical abuse and neglect, sometimes well into adulthood.

It should be noted that many studies on female sex offenders use (sometimes very small) clinical samples. That implies, firstly, that the prevalence of certain characteristics may fluctuate greatly over studies, depending on the nature of the sample. Secondly, findings about personality disorders should be interpreted with caution since women from clinical samples are generally treated for psychological problems after which in the clinical setting their roles as abuser become evident.

2.1.3 Victim and offense characteristics

In more than 75% of the cases, victim(s) of female sex offenders are relatives or acquaintances. Reports of strangers being victimized are rare. The sexual acts that occur during the abuse comprise the entire range of sexual abuse from genital fondling, oral sex to sexual penetration of the body (Mathews et al., 1991; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Vandiver & Walker, 2002).

Victims are usually children between 6-12 years old. The majority of the perpetrators abuse a female victim, the ratio is about 60-40 (Faller, 1995; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Vandiver & Walker, 2000); only Allen (1991) and Lewis and Stanley (2000) reported more male victims. Most perpetrators are heterosexual. The contradictory high percentage of female victims is assumed to be partly related to the fact that many women have a male co-offender (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004) and that male sex offenders usually prefer female victims. The percentage of female perpetrators abusing more than one victim varies over studies, from 15-50% (Faller, 1987; Faller, 1995; Vandiver & Walker, 2004).

Many female offenders commit the offense together with a co-offender, usually a man, often their intimate partner (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Faller, 1987; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; OConnor, 1987). Because these women abuse often, together with their husband, their own child(ren), it appears that the abuse is often intra-familial (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). Victim research gives indications, especially if the sexual abuse was intra-familial, that the children have experienced the role of the female offender, i.e. the mother, as very damaging (Denov, 2004a).

2.1.4 Typologies

Several authors have identified distinct subtypes within the group of female sex offenders (Sarrel & Masters, 1982; Matravers, 2002; Mathews et al., 1991; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Sandler & Freeman, 2007). We will discuss the last three studies which produced partly overlapping, partially different subtypes of female sex offenders.

The typology of Mathews et al. (1991) is the one most often referred to in the literature as it has the richest set of data and gives greatest insight into the nature of the offenses and the motivation of the perpetrators. The authors used a small clinical sample (N = 16) about which they however had extensive information. They clustered the women into groups in a qualitative manner, identifying three types of female sex offenders (in order of size of the groups). First the *teacher-lover type*, a woman who abuses an adolescent but denies the abuse, and herself feels that she has a love affair with the victim. Second the *intergenerationally predisposed type*, a woman with a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, who on her own abuses her own child or a child acquaintance. And finally the *male-coerced type*, a dependent woman, who has experienced sexually abuse herself, who (forcedly) participates in the abuse of a child or children, initiated by her husband or intimate partner.

Vandiver and Kercher (2004) used a significantly larger sample, but with fairly limited information. They distinguished six types (again in order of group size). First the *heterosexual nurturer*, a woman who abuses a male (young) adolescent but denies the abuse -- this category resembles the 'teacher-lover' type of Mathews et al. (1991). Second the *non criminal homosexual offender*, a woman who abuses young female victims, often without a history of delinquency or relapse. It is not clear from this study but it may be the case that these are women who co-abuse with their husband. Third the *female sexual predator*, a woman of nearly 30, who usually abuses a young male victim (on average 11 years old). Again, it is not clear from this study but it may be the case that these women are the mother of the victim. Fourth, they found the *young adult child exploiter*, a young woman, who assaults young children (boys and girls). Fifth, the *homosexual criminal*, an older woman with a high risk of relapse to any offense, who forces young children and adolescent women into sexual acts and sometimes into prostitution, possibly partly out of economic gain. And finally the *aggressive homosexual offender*, who is similar to the homosexual criminal except that her victims are mainly adult women. Vandiver and Kercher (2004) used mainly information about the nature of the sexual offenses, the sex and age of the victim and the age and criminal career of the offender. This information was extracted from the sex offender registry and the criminal history division, so they lack the

richness of the case study information of Mathews et al. (1991). It is therefore possible that their subtypes *homosexual criminal*, *female sexual predator* and *noncriminal homosexual offender* are mothers who co-offend with their partner and abuse their own child, and are actually variations of the type 'male-coerced' by Mathews et al. (1991).

Sandler and Freeman (2007) also used a large sample, but had even more limited information, narrowed down almost exclusively to the criminal careers of the women. They used, just like Vandiver and Kercher (2004) statistical clustering methods. However, they could only partially reproduce the typology of Vandiver and Kercher. Apart from the heterosexual nurturer (which they describe as a criminally-limited hebephile: someone with a sexual preference to young but sexually mature people) and the young adult child exploiter they identified four other subtypes, which only marginally differed on criminal career aspects from the Vandiver and Kercher subtypes.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Sample

For this paper, we had information on 672 cases registered between 1994 and 2005 with the Netherlands central prosecution service, entailing adult female defendants of at least one sexual offense. As such, in a statistical sense, we do not study a sample but rather the entire population of registered female sex offenders in the Netherlands for those years. Of these 672 registered cases, 598 cases could be linked to a criminal record. Ten percent of these suspects were acquitted and for 33% the prosecution was dropped for 'technical reasons', which implies that the prosecutor drops the case as he or she believes that there is insufficient evidence and that if the prosecutor takes the case to court the case will end up in an acquittal. This left us with 337 unique female sex offenders. Most of these offenders were hands-off offenders only, prosecuted mainly for human trafficking (these crimes are part of the chapter on sex offending in the Dutch penal code). We continued with 128 adult females who were registered for at least one hands-on sexual offense. For some of these women, their case was dismissed by the prosecutor for policy reasons, such as that the defendant had started therapy or had repaired relations with the victim. Cases under this uniquely Dutch system of prosecutorial expediency are in the Netherlands in academic research counted as convicted cases (Wartna, Blom, & Tollenaar, 2008). The Netherlands does not have plea bargaining, so that the offense categorization under which an offense is registered can be assumed to reflect the actual offense. For 17 cases no court files could be retrieved or had already been destroyed, so ultimately we analyzed the court files for 111 female hands-on sex offenders.

2.2.2 Variables and measuring instruments

From the court files, offender and offense variables were scored using the scoring tool for sex offenders previously developed and used extensively in various studies by Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006), supplemented by a number of variables particularly important for female sex offenders, such as relationship with and characteristics of any co-offender(s). A copy of this scoring tool and the metric of the variables are in Appendix A.

Court files in the Netherlands always contain the charge as well as the judicial decision, in which it is specified what offense the defendant was charged with respectively. was found guilty of, as well as a verbal description of what behavioural acts were determined proven by the court. Each court file contains a detailed charge by the prosecutor, which lists the acts purportedly committed by the defendant, entailing an exact description of the physical acts committed, against which victims, whose names and dates and places of births are given as well as their relation the offender, where the offending took place and at what dates and times. Almost every court file we saw contains transcripts of the police hearings of the offender, reports by each involved police officer of his or her findings ('proces verbaal') in each step of the case, victim and sometimes witness statements. If a defendant has had assistance from the probation service (the 'Reclassering' in the Netherlands which is an organization that also assists defendants and convicts in addition to serving as a controlling organization), probation reports are included too. If the prosecutor, judge or the lawyer requested psychological or psychiatric screening, the court file also contain the psychiatric and/or psychological reports. Such screenings are always carried out by certified Ministry of Justice appointed staff; reports are based on clinical judgment as well on standard tests used in Dutch clinical assessments by investigating psychologists and/or psychiatrists, such as the WAIS for intelligence and the MMPI for personality characteristics.

Offender background characteristics are features such as intelligence, school performance, neuroticism, self-esteem, susceptibility and psychopathology, and family characteristics such as marital status, experienced separations, current family, violence between the parents, and their own victimization of sexual abuse, neglect and maltreatment.

Offense characteristics include the number of co-offenders/accomplices, the legal definition of the sexual acts, the use of additional verbal or physical violence during the crime, the relationship between offender and victim(s), the number of victims, age and sex of the victim(s).

The information in the court files was scored by the first two researchers assisted by three Master students (two in Criminology and one in Clinical Psychology). Each had been trained in analyzing and scoring court files. All scorers

were instructed to code only information as explicitly written in the reports or files, and not to interpret any contextual information. At the beginning, ten randomly selected files were coded by two scorers, and codings were compared. It appeared that the information in the court files was in general clear and factual. Agreement was generally perfect, with only some discrepancies in scoring values either as 'not present' or 'missing' – which does not affect our later analysis.

Scores on norm-validated instruments, such as the WAIS, were coded into ordinal Dutch-population norm values. Next to the quantitative scoring, a short qualitative description was made of all index offenses.

All court files were scored before criminal career information was retrieved from the centralized criminal record files at the Netherlands JustId office in Almelo, to prevent bias in the scoring process. Permission for the study had been obtained from the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice.

2.2.3 Analysis

For the description of the characteristics of the perpetrators, victims and the offenses from the criminal and judicial records we used simple frequency counts.

Not all variables could be scored for all women. This is so because, in the Netherlands, the prosecutor or the defense may request psychological or psychiatric screening if psychological issues are supposed to be relevant for judging culpability or the need for treatment to be imposed. As such, psychological and/or psychiatric screening was requested only for a subset of all 111 women. When measurements were available on less than one third of all cases we do not report them at all. For instance, for neuroticism, extraversion and thrill seeking behaviour, the information available was so limited that these variables are not involved in the analysis. When information was not available for (almost) the entire sample, we indicate how large the N was that we based our statements on (stating for instance 'Intelligence was below average (N=48)'). Whenever we report characteristics that must be supposed to be elevated in the subset that did receive screening, such as personality disorders, we do not presume that the percentage measured in the screened group can be generalized to the entire sample and only report the actual number of cases diagnosed with a disorder (for example, '13 women were diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder').

Next, we examined if there are any differences between solo-offenders and co-offenders. We carried bivariate analyses on all available variables through either t-tests when variables were interval level or higher, or else chi-square tests. We only report results when they are significant at .05 level.

After these bivariate analyses, we used homogeneity or multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to examine typologies. MCA is an exploratory technique for mixed measurement level data. While not a cluster analysis as such, it

can be used to investigate whether subtypes with particular profiles exist. We used the program 'HOMALS' in SPSS version 16.0. HOMALS attempts to place respondents as well as their characteristics in a (usually) two-dimensional solution space, in which respondents should be placed close to the properties that characterise them, and properties should reciprocally be placed close to the respondents that have these properties. This principle implies that if persons share the same characteristics, they are placed near each other and near their shared characteristics. These individuals then constitute a *homogeneous group* that shares a profile of characteristics. Obviously not everyone can be always perfectly placed near his or her characteristics as people will in some aspects be similar but may differ in others.

Characteristics that do not explicitly belong to a group of persons are more central in the solution. Features shared by groups of individuals are among those groups. The technique will therefore always produce a compromise. A fit range (between zero and the number of dimensions of the solution) indicates how well the technique has been able to place respondents close to their characteristics.

MCA is a strongly exploratory technique: the solution does not give a strict cluster solution, nor objective criteria for a statistical model fit, nor possibilities to give the number of people belonging to a cluster or to give parameters. Substantive considerations play an important role in the choice of a solution and the interpretation is qualitative. For more information about MCA see Gifi (1990). Similar techniques (Smallest Space Analysis) are often used in the study of offender heterogeneity in (serial) murder and rape cases (see e.g., Salfati, 2003; Canter, Bennell, Alison, & Reddy, 2003).

In the analysis, we have taken nine variables that are important characteristics to identify homogeneous subtypes because they provide information about the nature and background of the offense and/or the offender and are frequently used in existing typologies. Given the N of the cohort and the number of categories per variables, the number of variables that could be incorporated was limited, and should employing the rule of thumb criterion that there should be at least ten times as many respondents as variables not exceed 10. Conservatively, to serve stability of the solution as well as broad as possible inclusion of variables, we chose to employ nine variables. Table 2.3 contains an overview of the variables we used for our analysis. The age of the victim is categorized, although in slightly different intervals than for perpetrators, corresponding to age limits laid down in specific sex offending articles (that distinguish between offending against a child under 12, or between the ages of 12 and 16) in the Dutch penal code.

To our analysis will be added a number of qualitative case descriptions, which are illustrative for the prototypes that we recognize in the analysis solution.

These case descriptions have not only been anonymized, but have also been deliberately altered by us in non-essential aspects to prevent recognition of offenders and/or victims, as confidentiality was the condition under which we were allowed to use the data and some of these cases had received a lot of media attention in the Netherlands.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Offender characteristics: personality, (social) environment and family factors

The average age of the 111 female sex offenders was 34 at the time of commission of the offense. The vast majority of perpetrators were ethnic Dutch (87%) while the remaining 13% had a different ethnicity and came from Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, from other countries or had a mixed ethnicity. When reported (N = 82), the intelligence of the women was borderline intellectual functioning (33%), low in the average (35%), average (26%) or above average (6%). The most common final educational level was elementary school, which is an exceptionally low final educational level in the Netherlands, or special education. A majority of the women (54%) came from intact families, 26% had divorced parents, 12% had (a) parent(s) who were deceased and two women had been adopted; four women reported a different family background (N = 73).

Almost one third of the women reported that they had been emotionally and/or pedagogically neglected and 16% reported having been abused physically and/or psychologically. Nearly one third of all women (31%) reported being sexually abused; two thirds of this sexual abuse was intra-familial (20% of all women). The median age at the commencement of sexual abuse was 8 years and the average duration of the abuse was approximately 7 years. Thirteen women reported (severe) psychopathology in their parents, while another 14 also reported serious violence between their parents. The information about all types of victimization was primarily obtained from the women after they had been charged with the sex offense; it could be possible that the claim of victimisation is a defense strategy.

Nearly one third of the women were married at the time of the index offense (32%), 40% was unmarried but had a relationship or cohabited and 16% was separated or divorced. The remaining 12% was single. Two thirds of the women had one or more children; 19% had no children; for the remainder we do not have this information. A quarter of the women had had a partner who physically abused them, one third reported a currently violent partner; a few women reported that they had been forced to have sex with other men or that they have been raped by their partner.

On the basis of psychological and psychiatric reports, 44 women were reported as having psychiatric syndromes, e.g. depression, depression with suicidal thoughts. Paraphilia was diagnosed in only three cases (two women with pedophilia and one with paraphilia NOS). Other reported disorders were an IQ at mentally disabled level, dissociative disorders, mood and anxiety disorders and posttraumatic stress disorders. In 47 women, a personality disorder was reported; six women had a borderline personality disorder, six women a dependent personality disorder and 26 women a personality disorder 'Not Otherwise Specified' with borderline and /or antisocial and/or dependent traits. The remaining women had combinations of the disorders mentioned above (e.g.. an antisocial disorder together with a borderline disorder). In 26 women both clinical syndromes and personality disorders were diagnosed.

Slightly more than one in eight women reported that they ever had used drugs (4% soft drugs like marijuana, 5% hard drugs like heroine or cocaine and 5% both). Prostitution work was reported by 14% of women; five women started with prostitution, whether forced or not, when they were still underage. For those who had been working as a prostitute, this had been for on average 5 years.

Including official records as well as self-reported offenses, more than a quarter of the women have committed offenses before the index offense. These include theft, violent offenses, fraud and sexual offenses (the latter were 3 women). Prostitution is not an offense in the Netherlands.

In summary, we conclude that the group of female sex offenders under investigation emerges as an intellectually low in the average functioning group, with a high prevalence of psychiatric or personality disorders, a high prevalence of neglect, and (especially sexual) abuse. For only one quarter of the women were no problems reported in the field of mental disorders, personality disorders, drug use, and a current violent partner or in the past, physical, sexual or mental abuse, neglect or prostitution.

2.3.2 Victim and offense characteristics

The legal qualification of the index crimes is shown in Table 2.1. If a woman was registered under multiple articles, we report the offense that carries the heaviest sentence.

Table 2.1. Offense characteristics

Type of crime	N	percentage
242 (rape)	25	20.7%
243 (sexual intercourse with incapacitated)	3	1.8%
244 (sexual intercourse with person <12 years)	15	13.5%
245 (sexual intercourse with person 12-16 years)	10	9.0%
246 (sexual assault)	9	8.1%
247 (sexual abuse of a minor)	28	24.3%
249 (sexual abuse of a minor with abuse of authority)	21	21.6%
Total	111	100%

Nearly two thirds (63%) of the women committed the abuse with another person. In 75% of these co-offender cases, the husband or intimate partner was the co-offender. A little over a third of the women was a solo-offender (the woman committed the offense on her own). Nearly one in every six women was an accomplice in the abuse. While not committing hands-on sexual acts, for all these women, however, criminal intent on the hands-on sexual offense was assumed proven by the criminal justice authorities. These are almost exclusively situations where the woman did not intervene in the abuse by another offender, and the victim is her own child.

The median age of the victims was 13 (range 0 - 60). The women abused on average 1.2 victims, 76% of the women had 1 victim, 23% abused 2-5 victims, one woman had 9 victims. Sixty percent of women abused a girl/woman, 31% abused a boy/man and 9% had both male and female victims. A third of the women abused her own child, 46% an acquaintance, 12% a (child) relative and 9% abused a stranger victim. A quarter of the women used (severe) physical and/or verbal violence accompanying the sexual offense, such as insulting, hitting or strangling the victim.

Most of the offenses came to the attention of the police through the victim (33%) or by reporting by a family member/caretaker of the victim (38%). The other ways in which the abuse became known includes reporting by an acquaintance of the victim, by a co-offender or by social workers.

In summary, we conclude that the female sex offenders studied here often make relatively young, female victims. The victim is only in 9% of cases a stranger. The abuse is often carried out with a male partner.

2.3.3 Bivariate analysis

Next, a bivariate analysis was conducted, in which differences between solo-offenders and co-offenders were examined on all available personality, offense and victim characteristics.

Solo-offenders more often had victims (59%); co-offenders more often had female victims (71%); 91% of all offenders who had victims of both sexes were co-offenders ($\chi^2 (2) = 24.496, p < 0.001$). Co-offenders more often had multiple victims (29%) than solo-offenders (13%) ($\chi^2 (1) = 3.768, p < 0.05$). Also, co-offenders more often (51%) than solo-offenders (31%) had intra-familial victims ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.362, p < 0.05$).

Co-offenders more often (57%) than solo-offenders (23%) had committed at least one offense that entailed penetration ($\chi^2 (1) = 11.722, p < 0.001$). Solo-offenders were less often (59%) mothers than co-offenders (86%) ($\chi^2 (1) = 8.519, p < 0.005$), and suffered less often (26%) than co-offenders (51%) from Axis II disorders ($\chi^2 (1) = 6.869, p < 0.01$). For the other variables, no significant differences were found.

Most of the differences are probably part of the setting and background, in other words, part of the 'profile' of the offense and the perpetrator, the multivariate association between the variables. As co-offenders co-offend with a partner - who may be male - it is more likely that they will victimize victims of different sexes. As co-offenders are often mothers, it is also more likely that they abuse their own children and that they abuse several children. In the next analysis, we will examine to what extent a number of these characteristics constitute multivariate patterns or subtypes.

2.3.4 Multivariate analysis

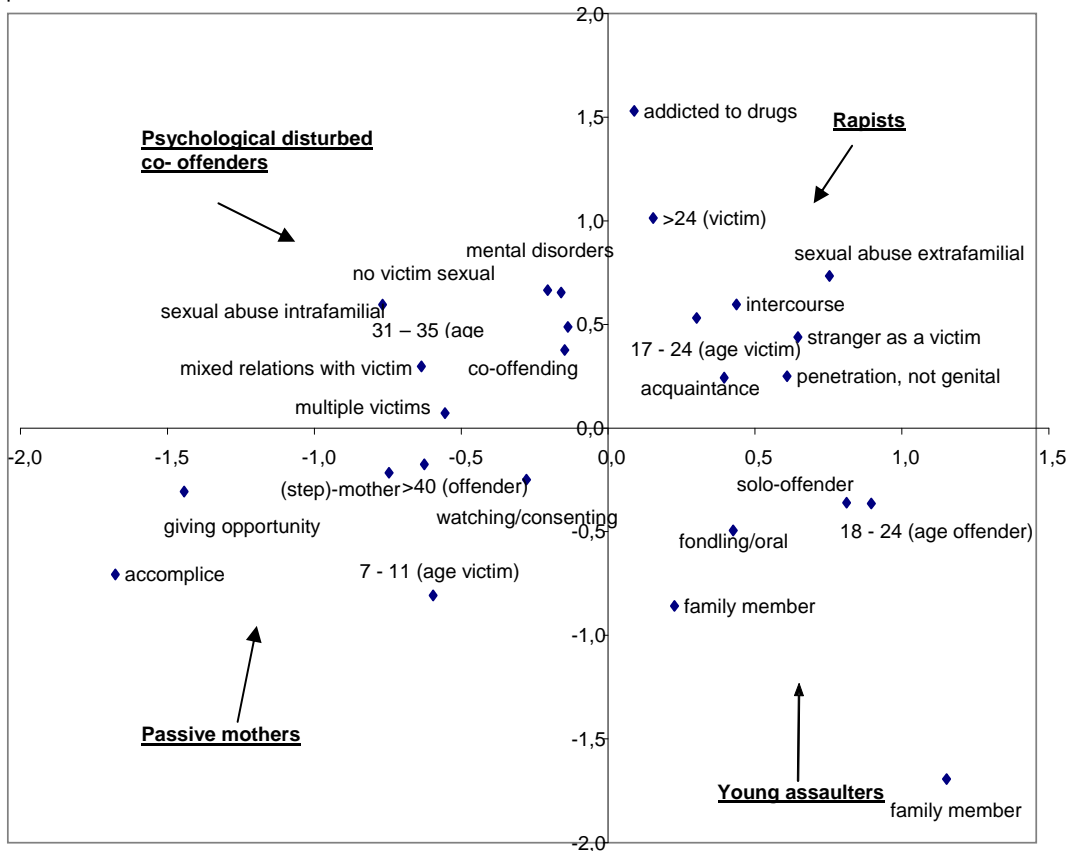
Table 2.2 lists the variables used in the multivariate analysis.

Table 2.2. Variables and categories used in MCA

Age at time of the offense: 18-24 25-30 31-35 36-40 ≥ 41	Age youngest victim: 0-6 7-11 12-16 17-24 ≥ 25
Kind of sexual act: intercourse penetration, not genital fondling/oral watching/consenting giving opportunity	Relation of offender with victim: (step) mother family member acquaintance stranger other
Drugs abuse: yes no	Multiple victims: no yes
Perpetrator sexually abused in childhood: intrafamilial extrafamilial no sexual abuse	Kind of offender: solo co-offender accomplice
Disorders (psychological, psychiatric, mental): absent present	

We opted for a solution in two dimensions. The analysis produced a solution with a fit of 0.48. This is a moderate fit. The positions of the respondents were well spread in the solution space, and there were no outliers. Figure 2.1 gives the plot with the positions of the characteristics.

Figure 2.1. Characteristics of the perpetrators and their offenses in the HOMALS picture



In the solution we identified four profiles of perpetrators. Given the moderate fit, it is not surprising that individuals do not fall neatly into distinct groups; many women apparently share aspects of profiles. In this way, any interpretation of the analysis inspecting for the presence of subgroups has to be regarded as an interpretation of *prototypes*, between which not sudden, disjunct but rather gradual transitions exist. Women may thus also combine characteristics of different prototypes. Similarly, some characteristics, not distinctive for certain prototypes are centrally placed. In the figure, the centrally placed characteristics are not indicated as they do not discriminate between offenders. As we use an exploratory technique that does not assign respondents to groups, we cannot give any indication of the size of the groups.

We used arrows to indicate the approximate positioning of the groups. The prototypes that we distinguish we named successively: the *young assaulters* (bottom right of the figure), the *rapists* (right up), the *psychologically disturbed co-*

offenders (left up) and *non-active (passive) mothers* (left bottom). When we interpret the figure, we can describe the prototypes as follows.

Offenders in the first prototype, called the young assaulter, in the bottom right of the figure, are young (18-24 years) and independently operating women, without marked mental disturbances, who commit acts like fondling and/or oral sex. The abuse often takes place during babysitting situations. It often concerns a male victim who is a relative of the offender. The perpetrator uses physical violence. This type of woman resembles the young adult child exploiter from the typology of Vandiver and Kercher (2004).

M., a 23-year-old Surinamese woman, lives with her aunt in the Netherlands and has frequently committed indecent acts on her nephews. These acts occurred during a 'babysitting' situation. She claimed to teach her nephew to learn what he had to do with a girl in the field of sex. This 'sex education' included squeezing and sucking the penis of her nephew and rubbing of her uncovered vagina on the body of her nephew. When this 'sex education' took place, M. locked her other nephew (the half-brother of the victim) in a shed. If the nephew of M. was reluctant to engage in the indecent acts, she used physical violence to force him. The abuse stopped after the youngest nephew threatened to speak about the locking up.

The second prototype, the rapist, is singled out by the seriousness of the offense. These are crimes such as sexual intercourse and penetration, usually on older victims. There is no clear preference of the offender for a male or female victim. Often non-family members were abused. The perpetrators themselves were sexually abused in their childhood by someone from outside the family. This type partly resembles the subtype female sexual predator described by Vandiver and Kercher (2004), and partly the inter-generationally predisposed molester distinguished by Mathews et al. (1991).

A., a 26-year-old woman, was walking back to her flat after grocery shopping. She came across two unknown boys who were playing in front of her flat (11 and 15 years). She asked them to help her with the heavy shopping bags. In her house, where more children were present (nieces and nephews of A.), she grabbed the 11-year old boy by his penis. Then A. took both boys into a room where she undressed herself, showed her breasts and vagina to both boys, and dressed again. Then she took the oldest boy with her to

another room, where she and the boy locked themselves in a closet, she grabbed his penis, and brought and kept his penis into her vagina. After the penetration, both boys quickly departed. After this incident, A. and the fifteen-year old boy had sex a few times.

The third group, the psychologically disturbed co-offender, is primarily characterized by the presence of mental disorders. This is a group of women with an average age between 30 and 35, who commit the offense together with one or more persons and who have in their youth been either sexually abused within their family or not been sexually abused. The relationships to their victims are of varying nature, the women often abuse their own children but the victims may also be a nephew or a girl next door. The abuse itself varies: it may concern fondling acts but also sexual intercourse and penetration. The perpetrators do not prefer a male or a female victim, a characteristic they also share with the fourth prototype. This third prototype resembles most the 'predisposed molestation-type' as found by Mathews et al. (1991), though we do find wide differences within this group with not all offenders having been sexually abused and not all abusing their own child. This appears the largest group, within which we find quite some variation.

S., a 42-year-old southern-European woman, severely sexually abused her own children and children from the neighbourhood (between the ages 5-13 years) on several occasions. The acts were committed with her husband and her neighbours. S. is described as a high susceptible woman, mentally retarded and suffers from a paraphilic disorder (paedophilia of the non-exclusive type) and a NOS personality disorder with dependent and evasive traits. She lured children from the neighbourhood, both boys and girls, into her house with sweets. S. and her husband were also having sexual intercourse with each other in the presence of the children while fondling the children. The children from the neighbourhood were also forced having sex with S.'s 17-year-old stepson. S. has indicated that the resistance and grief of her stepson sexually aroused her. S. has also been a co-offender in the abuse of her own 6-year old daughter. S. was not sexually abused in her youth.

The women in the fourth and final group, the passive mothers, are on average in the highest age group (> 41 years). The women watch the abuse of the child or provide opportunity for the abuse; according to their statements, they play no active role in the abuse. The abuse concerns their own children or stepchildren who

are relatively young (7-11 years). This group of perpetrators is responsible for the sexual abuse of children of both sexes. This group resembles most the male-coerced type of Mathews et al. (1991).

C., a 46-year-old woman, was raised in a family where God and the church played an important role. Sex education never took place. She let her second husband systematically abuse her two children. C. has a tendency to dependent behaviour and conflict avoidance. Her husband has performed sexual acts with her daughter of eight years and son of eleven years under the guise of sex education. The activities included, among others, joint viewing of porn videos and masturbation, fondling the two children and forcing the children to perform sexual acts on the husband. All this happened in the presence of and with the consent of C.

2.4 Discussion

We investigated an entire population of hands-on female sex offenders in the Netherlands. We collected data on offender, victim and offense characteristics. In comparison with international research we were able to collect relatively rich information for a relatively large group.

This group of female sex offenders is shown to be heavily charged in terms of family history (neglect and especially sexual abuse) and psychosocial problems (violent partners, drug use, and prostitution). On average, the women function at lower intellectual levels. There is a high prevalence of mental disorders.

Many women make relatively young, female victims, who are seldom a stranger. The abuse is often carried out with a male partner. Compared with what is known about male sex offenders in the Netherlands (Daalder & Essers, 2003) it appears that the female perpetrators are more often co-offending, and that they do so particularly with male (intimate) partners. All these findings are in line with what was known about female sex offenders from the international literature. The women who committed the sex offense(s) with a male partner had more victims, and the sex offenses more often entailed penetration. The fact that these women offended against more victims is probably partly attributable to the fact that victims were more often the woman's own children (although this was definitely not exclusively so). The fact that penetration was more often achieved may be due to the fact that victims were generally younger, and to the presence of the (male) co-perpetrator.

For the disorders, it may be so – and we found some qualitative indications for this in the psychological reports and trial reports - that some male perpetrators may have selected a mentally disturbed female functioning at much lower

intellectual level than himself who had access to children, these children being her own or children who had been entrusted to her care. As such, the lower level intellectual functioning and high prevalence of mental disorders may in fact be a corollary of selection by the male co-perpetrator.

The group of accomplices seems to be smaller than international research has reported. This may be due to differing prosecution strategies: in the Netherlands, the prosecutor may have decided sooner than in the US that there was insufficient evidence to take the case to court. It may also reflect a real difference.

While a large proportion of the women commit their crimes with one or more co-offenders and one can thus wonder whether they would have committed the crimes on their own, there exists also a group of female sex offenders that does commit the offense independently and a subgroup of these abuse extra-familial victims in a serious way. The last group concerns crimes that entail rape and (often) accompanying physical violence.

Overall, women commit sexual offenses from a very varied background and in different settings. We identified in our study four prototypes, namely the young assaulters, the rapists, the psychologically disturbed co-offenders and the passive mothers. The first two groups are relatively young offenders who abuse victims outside of their family; the last two are mainly mothers who abuse their own children. There are similarities and differences with the reported subtypes of female sex offenders in the literature and the prototypes that we described.

To begin with, we did not identify a teacher-lover type. This is not surprising since 'statutory rape' is not recognized as a legal concept in the Netherlands, whereas many of these cases in the U.S.A. may have been put into this category.

Our prototype rapist resembles the sexual predator of Vandiver and Kercher (2004) because of the young age of the offender at the time of the offense. Our young assaulter looks most like the young adult child exploiter that Vandiver and Kercher found because of the relatively light context of the offense, most of the times during babysitting-situations. The other subtypes that Vandiver and Kercher identified, we did not find. This is not surprising since these subtypes are mainly distinctive in criminal career aspects that we did not take along in our analysis.

Our 'passive' mothers resemble the male-coerced molester and (partly) the predisposed molester of Mathews et al. (1991). Our passive mothers were, like the male-coerced molester, acting in conjunction with a male. The women exhibit a pattern of extreme dependency and they reported fear of their partner. The victims of this type of offender are her own children. However, the passive mothers did not

match entirely with the predisposed molester type of Mathews et al. Not all women in our group acted alone and not all their victims were family-members.

This study has a number of strong points. We had access to data on an entire population of known female sex offenders. Also, we had relatively rich and validated data. Nevertheless, we must, perhaps even more than for research into male sexual offending, take into account that probably only a very small and possibly unrepresentative section of perpetrators has entered the criminal justice system. Also, not all women had undergone psychological or psychiatric screening. As such, this study may still underestimate the severity of the problems in this group.

Another limitation of this study, given that we collected our data from secondary sources compiled in the criminal investigation process, is that we do not know much about the motives (sexual desire, revenge, anger) or criminal intentions of these women. We also do not know if their motives differ from those of men.

The passive mothers in our study are in a sense problematic: they themselves have performed no hands-on sexual acts, but are an accomplice to the abuse of another perpetrator. While, legally speaking, there is criminal intent on the hands-on sexual offense, it is difficult to say whether they should be classified as hands-on perpetrators for studies such as this one. This raises the question whether they belong at all in our analyses. We chose to include them firstly because several other studies did so too, and, secondly, because the denial of responsibility is not uncommon in group sex offending cases: many offenders in such cases declare that the other was active, but they stood by and watched (Harkins & Dixon, 2009). Denial of active participation can thus also be a defense strategy. It may also be the case that some of these mothers have indeed let the abuse of their children happen or continue because they felt threatened or felt unable to protest. Further research on this group seems warranted.

Lastly, a weak point of our study is that we did not make a systematic comparison with male sex offenders. Any differences between our findings and those from comparable studies on male sex offenders may thus be attributable to method differences.

A next issue is what the implications are of our findings for treatment and intervention. Given the very low official number of female sexual offenders in the Netherlands, there is simply little experience with treatment of these women. Our multiple correspondence analysis showed that the backgrounds of these women, their type of sex offense, the kind of victim and the setting in which the offense took place vary widely. Thus, any treatment of these female sex offenders should be tailored. For some women, the treatment should focus more on the sexual aspects of the offense, for others this seems less important - issues of suggestibility appear particularly warranted for the co-offending women.

For some of the female perpetrators of sexual offenses it seems that committing a sex offense is more like the culmination of a list of complicated problems, and a corollary of a childhood of abuse, maltreatment and neglect, followed by a life of weak functioning, dependence, (continued) maltreatment and mental problems. A lot of these women are traumatized and treatment of these traumas is probably the best starting point for their treatment.

Lastly, the question remains whether female sex offenders are offenders for whom the sex offense is a single digression, or whether these women commit a range of offenses of which the sex offense is a 'by-product', e.g. whether they are generalists, or whether multiple (sex) offending characterizes their criminal career, in which case we would label them as specialists. This also has consequences for treatment. Should they be treated in a generalist way or as sex offenders?

Associated questions are to what extent their criminal careers are associated with background characteristics, psychopathology, the nature of the sexual offenses, types of victims, and the context of the offense (solo- or in a group, within or outside the family). These issues we aim to address in subsequent studies.

Despite the fact that the number of studies on female sex offending is very limited, we can say that female sex offenders do exist and that they, just like men, commit very serious sex offenses. Yes, also women do such things. We also conclude that just as with male sex offenders, *the* female sex offender probably does not exist.

Appendix

Appendix A: List of variables and measurement level

<u>Variable name</u>	<u>Measurement level</u>
Etnicity	nominal
IQ level	ordinal
Neuroticism	ordinal
Impulsiveness	ordinal
Extraversion	ordinal
Thrill-seeking behavior	ordinal
Conscience development	ordinal
Self-esteem	ordinal
Susceptibility	ordinal
Disorder	nominal
DSM- Axis I	nominal
DSM- Axis II	nominal
Drugs abuse offender	nominal
Number of previous offenses	absolute
Type of previous offense	nominal
Age at 1st offense	absolute
Martital status	nominal
Number of previous relationships	absolute
Delinquent partner	nominal
Violent partner	nominal
Number of children	absolute
Family background	nominal
Number of brothers	absolute
Number of sisters	absolute
Birth order	absolute
Alcohol abuse family	nominal
Drugs abuse family	nominal
Unemployment in family	nominal
Birth complications	ordinal
Neglect	nominal
Maltreatment	nominal
Sexual abuse	nominal
Psychopathology parents	ordinal
Age start sexual abuse	absolute
Duration of sexual abuse	absolute

Multiple care-givers	nominal
Violence between parents	nominal
Education	ordinal
Bullied at school	nominal
Contact peers	ordinal
Contact own children	ordinal
Physical violence during the offense	nominal
Prostitution	nominal
Age beginning with prostitution	absolute
Duration prostitution	absolute
Article in criminal code	nominal
Nature of sexual behavior	nominal
Use of violence	nominal
Age victim	absolute
Relationship victim	nominal
Role of perpetrator	nominal
Co-offender (s)	nominal
Notification police	nominal
Decision judge	nominal

Chapter 3 Female sex offenders: Specialists, generalists and once-only offenders⁶

Little is known about the criminal careers of female sex offenders. A meta-analysis by Cortoni, Hanson and Coache (2010) revealed that about 1.5% of female sex offenders re-offend to a sexual offense. Even less is known about the extent to which female sex offenders' criminal careers contain sex offenses as well as other offenses, e.g. the extent of specialization in sex offending.

This study examines the criminal careers of all female sex offenders prosecuted by the criminal justice authorities in the Netherlands in the period 1994-2005. A latent class analysis shows that three subgroups of women can be distinguished: once-only offenders (who commit just one sex offense and no other offense), generalists (who combine sex offending with relatively many serious other, often violent, offenses) and specialists (who commit relatively many sex offenses next to some minor offenses). Women in these three criminal career types differ in characteristics such as victimization history, alcohol abuse, and the sex of the victims.

⁶ This chapter is an adapted version of :

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3.1 Introduction

Almost all research on sex offending concerns male sex offenders (Daalder & Essers, 2003; Elliott, 1993; Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983; Hunter, Becker, & Lexier, 2006; Marshall, Laws, & Barbaree, 1990). In the past few years, however, more attention has been directed, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, towards women committing sexual offenses. From these studies, that often employ small and clinical samples, we know that generally female sex offenders are characterized by a problematic background with experiences of (sexual) abuse and psychiatric disorders (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Johansson-Love & Fremouw, 2006; Strickland, 2008). They abuse mainly (their own) children and they often co-offend with their romantic partner; for an overview of the literature see Wijkman, Bijleveld and Hendriks (2010).

Research concerning male sex offenders shows that there is no such thing as a typical sex offender: offenders differ in characteristics such as personality, offense and victim choice (Hilarski & Christensen, 2006; Keller, Theriot, & Dulmus, 2006; Ward & Beech, 2006). For instance, adult offenders with a pre-pubertal victim tend to have a different motivation, risk profile and *modus operandi* (e.g. Bickley & Beech, 2001; Daalder & Essers, 2003) when compared with offenders with an adult victim. Such heterogeneity is also found for adult female sex offenders, who differ in victim choice, background characteristics and offense context (Sandler & Freeman, 2007; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004; Wijkman, Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2010)

3.1.1 Criminal career research

Next to the differences mentioned before, offenders in general also differ in their criminal career. They differ in the extent to which their careers are characterized by specialization (committing offenses of the same type) or generality (committing offenses of different types) (Guerette, Stenius, & McGloin, 2005; Mazerolle, Brame, Paternoster, Piquero, & Dean, 2000; Piquero, 2000). Sex offenders tend to specialize more than other offenders as they relatively frequently re-offend sexually when compared with non-sex offenders (Hanson, Scott, & Steffy, 1995; Langan, Schmitt, & Durose, 2003; Sample & Bray, 2003). Some offenders specialize more than others (Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, & Knight, 2009; Lussier, 2005; Miethe, Olson, & Mitchell, 2006; Soothill, Francis, Sanderson, & Ackerley, 2000): child abusers for instance tend to specialize more than sex offenders with an older or adult victim (Knight & Prentky, 1993; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003).

Specialization has mostly been investigated through recidivism studies. Such studies have the disadvantage that they only investigate the first new offense and do not take into account any patterning of offenses over the entire career. In

addition, recidivism studies may be difficult to compare because of differences in follow-up time and sample composition (Lussier, 2005). As far as we are aware, only Soothill et al. (2000) have researched the entire criminal career of male sex offenders. They showed that (excluding offenders convicted of the idiosyncratic offense 'indecentcy between males'), 44% ($N=2606$) exhibited a specialist offending pattern.⁷

3.1.2 Specialization in female sex offenders

Little is known about the extent to which female sex offenders specialize in sex offending. Cortoni, Hanson and Coache (2010) combined the limited research on re-offending female sex offenders and found that 1.5% re-offends sexually over an average follow-up period of 5.9 years. Male sex offenders have considerably higher percentages of re-offending, averaging about 13.5%, over a mean follow-up period of 5.5 years (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). However, these percentages cannot be interpreted as an indication of the extent to which offenders specialize in sex offending. These figures do not tell us anything about the number of sex offenses committed before the sampling offense, after the recidivism offense, nor do they- with the exception of Cortoni et al (2010)- tell us about any non-sexual offenses. Based on what is known for male sex offenders on the association between background characteristics and the extent to which they specialize in sex offending, we may expect that females differ in the extent to which they specialize.

Our study is important from a theoretical point of view. Very little is known about female sex offenders and their criminal careers. Because of this, researchers, practitioners and psychologists run the risk of generalizing characteristics from male sex offenders to female sex offenders. As such, females sometimes receive the same risk assessment and treatment as male sex offenders. In doing so, female sex offenders are considered as sex offenders who are by chance female, and not as a female who committed a sex offense (Eldridge & Ashfield, 2010). However, research about general and violent female offending overwhelmingly shows that males and females differ in onset, development and persistence of their criminal careers - they should therefore be considered as two different groups with different risk profiles and treatment needs (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Such a differentiation should therefore also be made concerning male and female sex offenders.

A number of the differences between male and female sex offenders can be expected when examining empirical data from the Netherlands, the country where our study was conducted. First, only about 15% of Dutch female sex

⁷ We calculated the number of specialists ourselves by using Table 3 of the article of Soothill et al. (2000).

offenders have an ethnic minority background (Wijkman, et al., 2010) while for male sex offenders this percentage is about 50 (Wijk & Blokland, 2008). Offenders with an ethnic Dutch background are more frequently involved in pedosexual offenses when compared with non-ethnic Dutch offenders (Leuw, Bijl, & Daalder, 2004). We also know that offenders of pedosexual offenses specialize more towards sex offenses (Harris, et al., 2009; Lussier, LeBlanc, & Proulx, 2005). When ethnic background is connected in a similar way with female sex offenders as it is with male sex offenders, this would lead us to expect that relatively many females would specialize in sex offending because they have more often than male sex offenders a non-ethnic Dutch background

Secondly, police data shows that about half of all suspects of a sex offense with multiple offenders are adult males (Bijleveld & Soudijn, 2008). Relatively more female offenders (65%) offend with a co-offender, mostly male and often their romantic partner (Wijkman, et al., 2010). The presence of an anti-social partner in these women's lives might imply that these women themselves run the risk of getting involved in the antisocial behaviour of their partner, and thus develop a generalistic offending pattern.

On the other hand, since the co-offender is often the woman's romantic partner, and as they often abuse their own children, the offending might more easily become a repeated or chronic pattern of offending, which would render the criminal career more specialistic. In addition to the latter, relatively many female sex offenders have been traumatized, function at a low intellectual level, and suffer from psychological and/or psychiatric disorders; furthermore, female sex offenders are on average strongly dependent on their partner (Gannon, Rose, & Ward, 2008; Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989; Wijkman, et al., 2010). This susceptibility, combined with functioning at an intellectually low level, may render the woman more susceptible to pressure as exerted by her partner during the abuse of her children. Thus, the presence of the co-offending partner could work both ways.

Consequently, it can be observed that there are multiple reasons to assume that female sex offenders will develop a different offending pattern than male sex offenders, and that they may tend to specialize more often than males do. This could implicate that female sex offenders should be considered and treated differently than male sex offenders.

In this paper we will investigate to what extent adult female sex offenders specialize in sex offending and to what extent they can be characterized as generalists. We will also investigate whether specialization and generalistic offending patterns are associated with personal and offense characteristics.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Sample

Our starting sample was composed of 672 criminal prosecution cases registered between 1994 and 2005 with the Netherlands central prosecution service, involving adult female defendants of at least one sexual offense. As such, in a statistical sense, we have not studied a sample but rather the entire population of registered female sex offenders in the Netherlands for those years. Of these 672 registered cases, 598 cases could be linked to a criminal record. Ten percent of these suspects were acquitted and for 33% the prosecution was dropped for “technical reasons,” which implies that the prosecutor drops the case due to insufficient evidence making an acquittal almost certain. This left 337 “unique” female sex offenders. Most of these offenders were hands-off offenders only, prosecuted mainly for human trafficking (these crimes are part of the chapter on sex offending in the Dutch penal code).

We ended up with 135 adult females who were registered for at least one hands-on sexual offense. For some of these women, their case was dismissed by the prosecutor for policy reasons, such as that the defendant had started therapy or had paid damages to the victim. Cases under this uniquely Dutch system of prosecutorial expediency are counted as convicted cases in academic research in the Netherlands (Wartna, Blom, & Tollenaar, 2008). The Netherlands does not have plea bargaining; so the offense categorization under which an offense is registered can be assumed to reflect the actual offense. In addition to obtaining the criminal career information, we analyzed the prosecution and court files for all 135 females. Permission for the study was obtained from the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice.

The vast majority of perpetrators were ethnic Dutch (84%, $N=113$). The remaining 16% had a different ethnicity and came from Turkey ($N=2$), Surinam ($N=4$), the Netherlands Antilles ($N=5$), from other West-European or African countries ($N=10$), or had a mixed ethnicity ($N=1$). The most common final educational level was elementary school, which is exceptionally low for the Netherlands, or special education ($N=64$). Over half of the women ($N=74$) were married or involved in a relationship; 21% ($N=28$) were divorced. Forty percent ($N=56$) of women had children. At the time of the sampling offense the women were on average 35 years.

3.2.2 Variables and measuring instruments

From the court files, offender and offense variables were scored using the scoring tool for sex offenders previously developed and used extensively in various studies by Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006) supplemented by a number of variables particularly important for female sex offenders, such as relationship with and characteristics of any co-offender(s). Court files in the Netherlands always contain the charge as well as the judicial decision, in which it is specified what offense the defendant was charged with and was in case of a court verdict found guilty of, as well as a verbal description of what behavioural acts were determined proven by the court. Each court file contains a detailed charge by the prosecutor, which lists the acts purportedly committed by the defendant, entailing an exact description of the physical acts committed, against which victims, whose name and date and place of birth are given as well as their relationship to the offender, alongside where the offending took place and relevant dates and times. Almost every court file contains transcripts of the police hearings of the offender, reports by each involved police officer of his or her findings ('*proces verbaal*') at each step of the case, together with victim and sometimes witness statements. If a defendant had had contact with the probation service (the *Reclassering* in the Netherlands, which is an organization that also assists defendants and convicts in addition to serving as a supervisory organization), probation reports were also present. If the prosecutor, judge or lawyer requested psychological or psychiatric screening, the court file also contains the psychiatric and/or psychological reports. These screenings are not compulsory. Such screenings are carried out by certified psychologists/psychiatrists by appointment of the Ministry of Justice, at the request of the prosecutor, judge or even the lawyer. Personality assessments are based on standard tests used in Dutch clinical assessments, such as the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale for intelligence and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory for personality characteristics. Clinical judgments are included.

The factual information in the court files was extracted by the first two researchers assisted by three master students (Criminology and/or Clinical Psychology). Each had been trained in analyzing and scoring court files. Scores on norm-validated instruments, such as the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, were coded into ordinal Dutch population norm values. After the quantitative coding of data, a short qualitative description was made of all index offenses. Follow up time ranged from 4 to 16 years with an average of 11 years after the index sexual offense. At the time criminal history information on these women was last retrieved, the female sex offenders in our sample were 46 years old on average.

Court files were studied before criminal career information was retrieved from the centralized criminal record files at the Netherlands Judicial Information

service to prevent any bias in the coding process. A criminal record file contains all offenses ever registered by the Prosecution Service for a person, starting at age 12, which is the age of criminal responsibility in the Netherlands. We again excluded acquittals and technical dismissals. We combined information from the court files and criminal career files to estimate the number of times a woman had committed a sex offense in her life. When we were not sure about the exact number, we always scored the lowest possible number (i.e. if it said in a court file 'several', this was coded as '2'), so there is a chance we underestimated the number of sex offenses.

3.2.3 Analysis

To describe the characteristics of the group female sex offenders we used frequency counts. To examine specialization and generalization in offending, we used Latent Class Analysis (LCA). With LCA a group of offenders is divided into a limited, pre-set number of classes. The technique assumes that the scores on the observed (or manifest) categorical variables are not correlated given the latent class a person belongs to. As such, LCA can be seen as a factor-analytic technique in which the latent and manifest variables are nominal.

The observed variables are the frequencies at which the female sex offenders have committed various offenses over their entire criminal career. Subsequently, the technique tries to classify the offenders into groups that share combinations of offending patterns, for example a group with only sex offenses, or a group with mainly other offenses. We imposed a restriction on the LCA in the sense that we requested the offenders who committed one and only one sex offense and no other offense to be classified into a separate group. This is because such 'once-only offenders' do not have a criminal 'career' as such.

A final, optimal model is chosen after several models (e.g. with a different number of classes, or with different restrictions) have been compared. Models are first compared as to whether they fit the data at all. This is done using the χ^2 test. Next, given a set of fitting models, the optimal model is picked. This is done employing three criteria, namely the likelihood ratio (LR), the pb (LR) or the parametric bootstrap and the Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) where the model with the lowest BIC is preferred.

Finally, using the *posterior* probabilities (the proportion of persons within a class who score within a certain category of a manifest variable), we can interpret the classes. Apart from technical considerations, interpretability plays a role as well in model selection. For more on LCA see Mc Cutcheon (1987).

The manifest variables we incorporated are the numbers of hands-on sex offenses, hands-off sex offenses, serious offenses and minor offenses. Serious and minor offenses are distinguished based on the maximum sentence they carry in the Netherlands. The category serious offenses consists of for instance murder,

manslaughter, violent offenses and drugs offenses. Minor offenses are for example common theft, vandalism and public order offenses (Heiden - Attema & Bol, 2000).

After the LCA, we investigated whether women in different latent classes differ on personal, offense or background characteristics using χ^2 tests for nominal variables and independent sample t-tests for interval level variables. For the χ^2 a standardised residual score larger than 2 is considered as an indication for an existing difference. Only significant results at the 5% level are reported. When directional tests are employed, this is reported. When classes on the various characteristics are compared, we compare all classes. However, when differences concerning criminal career characteristics such as criminal career duration are discussed, the once-only offenders are excluded because they do not have a criminal career.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Offender, offense, and victim characteristics

According to the psychological and psychiatric reports, 42% (N=52) of the female sex offenders functioned at a below average or borderline intellectual level. About half of the women (48%, N=65) had an Axis I (e.g., depression or alcohol addiction) or Axis II disorder (e.g., mental retardation or borderline personality disorder). For 19% (N=26) co-morbidity was reported. Over one quarter (N=35) of the women had been neglected in childhood, 13% (N=17) were physically abused and 22% (N=30) were sexually abused; more than one third (N=48) has experienced some kind of abuse or neglect. Current drugs abuse (hard drugs and/or soft drugs) was reported by 10% (N=13). Data on alcohol abuse was not collected. Working as a prostitute, on average 5 years, was reported by 13% (N=18) of the offenders. About 18% (N=24) of the offenders had had a partner who physically abused them and almost a quarter (N=32) reported a currently violent partner.

The median age of the victims was 13 years (range = 0-60 years). In 44% (N=59) of the cases the victims were intrafamilial, 47% (N=64) were extrafamilial. For 9% (N=12) the link with the victim was unknown. Males were victimized by 30% (N=37) of the women, 58% (N=72) had a female victim and 12% (N=15) had both male and female victims; 26% (N=35) of the offenders abused more than one victim. For 12 women we had no information about the nature of the offending. More than a quarter (N=39) of the women was a solo-offender, 51% (N=69) a co-offender and 12% (N=15) an accomplice (meaning that she knowingly facilitated the offense); For all offenses, criminal intent was assumed by the criminal justice authorities. A majority (55%, N=74) of the co-offenders was the romantic partner of the woman. In commission of the offense, verbal violence was employed by 24% (N=32) and 18% (N=24) used physical violence.

3.3.2 Criminal career characteristics

For almost two-thirds of the women in the sample, the sampling sex offense was the first offense these women were prosecuted for. For all but one woman, the sampling sex offense was the first sex offense they had been prosecuted for. This does not mean that most had committed only one sex offense upon being prosecuted for the sampling offense: the court files of these women revealed that one charge could pertain to the repeated abuse of one child, or the abuse of several victims that came to light when they were arrested for the sampling sex offense. Two women (1.5%) re-offended to a (hands on) sexual offense, while violent re-offending was 7.4 % (10 women) and general re-offending was 27.4% (37 women).

3.3.3 Latent class analysis

Table 3.1 gives an overview of the various latent class models with increasing numbers of classes, all with the restriction that women who had committed only one sex offense and no other offenses must be placed in a separate class. We assess the solutions, as described above using the Bayes Information Criterion (BIC), and the values of the LR and the bootstrapped LR.

Table 3.1. Diagnostics of LCA models with different numbers of classes

Model	BIC	LR	pb(LR)	Df
2	881.33	55.80	0.69	62
3	881.12	26.30	0.99	56
4	894.41	20.05	0.99	52
5	904.13	15.13	0.99	49

Model 2 and model 3 have similar BIC values, with model 3 fitting slightly better. The models with four and five classes have distinctly worse BIC values and are less parsimonious. The LR en pb (LR) are better in model 3 than in model 2. For these three reasons, we choose model 3, the model with three classes, as the best model.

Table 3.2 gives the distribution of the respondents over the classes as well as the posterior probabilities, i.e. the proportion of women within a class who score within a certain category of the manifest variable.

Table 3.2. Distribution of the female sex offenders over the classes and the proportion of women per class within the categories of the offense variables.

	1. Once-only N=22 (16.3%)	2. Generalists N= 36 (26.7%)	3. Specialists N= 77 (57.0%)
<i>Hands-on</i>			
1 offense	1.00	0.58	0.35
2-4 offenses	0.00	0.38	0.25
5 or more offenses	0.00	0.04	0.40
<i>Hands-off</i>			
No offenses	1.00	1.00	0.87
1 or more offenses	0.00	0.00	0.13
<i>Serious offenses</i>			
No offenses	1.00	0.00	0.93
1 offense	0.00	0.39	0.07
2 or more offenses	0.00	0.61	0.00
<i>Minor offenses</i>			
No offenses	1.00	0.11	0.63
1 offense	0.00	0.19	0.17
2-4 offenses	0.00	0.13	0.17
5 or more offenses	0.00	0.57	0.04

The first row of table 3.2 shows that of 135 female sex offenders, 16% (N=22) are placed in class 1, 27% (N=36) in class 2 and 57% (N=77) in class 3.

Class 1 is the class with women who were convicted for only one sex offense. These women we name the *once-only offenders*; we constrained the technique as explained above to generate this class.

In the second class a majority of women committed only one sex offense; almost all women committed multiple other non-sexual offenses. Although a further 42% of the respondents committed two or more sex offenses, we see that without exception all offenders committed a serious offense next to the sex offense: 39% committed one serious offense and 61% even two or more. Many offenders (89%) committed minor offenses. Remarkably, no offender in this class committed a hands-off offense. Because of the versatility in offending and the large number of committed offenses, we label the offenders in this class *generalists*.

The third class is the class with offenders who committed the most sex offenses. Almost two thirds committed two or more sex offenses and 40% five or more. Remarkably, this is the only class in which women are placed who committed hands-off offenses as well: in court files we read that in most cases these were women who during the abuse took pictures or produced videos of the abuse. Offenders in this third class committed hardly any serious crimes and a minority has been convicted for a minor offense. Some women committed only one sex

offense, but because these had also committed at least one other offense, they could not be placed in class 1. All in all, since these women committed mainly (many) sex offenses and generally few other crimes, we call them the *specialists*

Thus, we see that we indeed find more (57%) specialists than had been found within males (Soothill, et al., 2000). This shows that within the group of female sex offenders there are relatively many specialists: when we disregard the 16% once-only offenders, as they could not have been classified as specialists or generalists, the percentage of specialist female sex offenders increases to 68%.

In the following we will investigate whether women in the different classes differ on pertinent personal, offense and criminal career characteristics.

3.3.4 Differences in background characteristics between female sex offender classes

Specialists have experienced more sexual abuse in their childhood ($\chi^2(2) = 5.93$, $p < .05$, 1-tailed) and have more frequently a delinquent partner ($\chi^2(2) = 9.56$, $p < .05$). Generalistic offenders on the other hand belong more often to an ethnic minority ($\chi^2(2) = 7.08$, $p < .05$), have more frequently used drugs ($\chi^2(2) = 9.48$, $p < .01$) and have more often been physically maltreated in their childhood ($\chi^2(2) = 6.97$, $p < .05$).

This indicates, similarly to what was found in male sex offenders, that there is a link between ethnicity and specialistic offending: ethnic-Dutch women are more frequently specialists, and minority women more often generalists. We see that specialists, as has been found for male sex child abusers, are characterized by traumatic experiences notably sexual abuse in childhood. There was no relation between class membership and IQ, susceptibility, or Axis I or Axis II disorders.

3.3.5 Differences in offense and victim characteristics between female sex offender classes

Women who co-offended with a male intimate partner were more frequently specialists ($\chi^2(2) = 5.70$, $p < .05$, 1-tailed). Specialists more frequently offended against victims of both sexes ($\chi^2(2) = 9.48$, $p < .05$) and they often had victims they were acquainted with ($\chi^2(2) = 5.24$, $p < .05$, 1-tailed). These differences are as expected. No other differences were found between the classes and offense characteristics.

3.3.6 Differences in criminal career characteristics between specialists and generalists

The average age of the female offenders at the sampling offense was, as reported above, 35 years. The mean follow-up period was 11 years. This means that the women were on average about 46 years old at the end of our follow-up period, and that our entire observation period, with 12 the age of criminal responsibility, was 34 years. Investigating differences between generalists and specialists, it turns out that generalists started offending at a significantly younger age (30.02) than specialists (34.22): ($t(111) = -2.282, p < .05$). The length of the criminal career (defined as the time period between last and first conviction, corrected for incarceration and intramural treatment) of the women was on average 3.9 years ($SD = 5.4$). The criminal career of generalists and specialists differed ($t(47.047) = 3.261, p < .005$): the career of the generalists is significantly longer.

Before the sampling offense, generalists had been more criminally active than specialists (4.4 vs. 1.5 offenses; $t(27.479) = 1.994, p < .05, 1\text{-tailed}$), the difference was not due to their longer career length before the sampling offense. It was mainly due to generalists committing more property offenses ($\chi^2(1) = 7.152, p < .05$). No other differences in criminal career characteristics were found between generalists and specialists.

3.4 Discussion

We were able to examine a group of hands-on female sex offenders ($N=135$) who constitute in a statistical sense the entire population of known convicted female sex offenders in the Netherlands. We collected relatively rich data from the court files that often contained psychological screenings and precise descriptions of the offenses committed, victims and co-offenders. For the women in our sample, criminal career information spanned a long periode; on average 34 years.

The group of female sex offenders had relatively often experienced traumas in childhood. The rate of victimization of sexual abuse is, however, relatively low (22%) compared to findings from other studies (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Kaplan & Green, 1995; Matthews, Mathews, & Speltz, 1991). Perhaps this is caused by the fact that we have not studied a clinical sample, which is often the case in other studies. Comparable to findings from other studies (Matthews, 1998; Sandler & Freeman, 2007; Vandiver, 2006) is that many of the women in our study suffered from mental disorders (like depression or a borderline personality disorder) and that most offended against (their own) children. Also, many offended with a male co-offender, who was often their romantic partner.

The latent class analysis generated a model with three classes, of which one had explicitly been restricted to consist of women who had committed one sex offense only. As expected, a relatively large number of women were classified as specialists. Generalists had all committed, besides the sex offense, at least one serious offense. In addition, many also committed relatively minor offenses like shoplifting, traffic offenses and receiving stolen goods. Their sex offending was more often against unknown victims compared with the two other groups of offenders. They had started their criminal careers relatively early. With these features, these women correspond to the general prototype of the antisocial offender. Given their versatile offending pattern and their relatively higher preference for an unknown victim this group best resembles the profile of adult male rapists.

The specialists are women who have committed multiple sex offenses, some of them over a relatively long period, and have committed few other offenses, and if so, mainly minor offenses. Most of these women had offended against victims who are acquaintances or family. Given this victim preference, increased levels of sexual abuse victimization and the long period over which sex offending continues, these women in a sense resemble male (juvenile) child abusers (Harris, et al., 2009; Lussier, et al., 2005).

While part of our findings are in the expected direction and correspond to findings for male sex offenders, it is striking that we found so few other differences between the offender groups, in terms of personality characteristics, age etcetera. Part of this may be due to our, in an absolute sense, low N. Another explanation may be the prominent presence of a male co-offender for many of these women. It might be so that, if these women 'followed' the preferences of their partners, their own characteristics do not associate that strongly to their offense patterning and it may be their co-offenders' characteristics that are more important.

A second consistent finding is that the class of once-only offenders was indistinguishable from the other two sex offender classes on background, personality, offense and victim characteristics. Again the small class size may have made it harder for significant differences to emerge. However, this also raises the question of whether they are not a 'mixture' of the other two types. They could be a mixture in the sense that they are not once-only offenders, but actually starters for whom a generalistic or specialistic offending pattern still has to develop. However, the once-only offenders are not (significantly) younger than the generalistic and specialistic offenders. They could thus also constitute a mixture in the sense that their single sex offense is the only offense that became known to the justice authorities. All in all, it is difficult to profile the group of once-only offenders.

This study covers an entire population of female hands-on sex offenders, whose criminal careers we were able to study over 34 years. Despite the large

temporal coverage, we will have to keep in mind that, perhaps even more than with male sex offenders (Allen, 1991; Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Kaplan & Green, 1995) only a very small part of their sexual offenses is reported to the police. Also, we could not identify all background, personality, offense and victim characteristics for all offenders, as not all offenders underwent psychological screening. This means that we may have underestimated issues such as (sexual abuse) victimization and disorders. Lastly, we could not always assess unambiguously from the criminal records how many (sex) offenses a woman had committed previously. In those cases we counted conservatively: obviously we may thus have underestimated offending frequency.

We believe that the group of specialists may actually comprise further, qualitatively different, types of specialist sex offenders. Some of the female sex offenders ended up in this group because they had abused their own child repeatedly, in a similar fashion, over a number of years. Other female sex offenders had lured various neighbourhood children at different occasions to their home and abused them. Again others had abused handicapped children who had been entrusted to them. These women – while all repeatedly committing sexual abuse – exhibit different modus operandi, differ in the number of different victims, and other relevant offense characteristics. They may also differ in personal and other characteristics. As these different kinds of specialist offender are all combined in one class, and analyzed as a whole, this may have obscured existing differences. Given our N, qualitative research into these various manifestations of specialization seems more suitable to explore this further.

Paraphilia was diagnosed in only three cases (two women with pedophilia and one with paraphilia not otherwise specified). It is well known that women are less frequently than men diagnosed with some kind of paraphilia, with a ratio of about 1:30 (Abel & Osborn, 2000). Despite the fact that paraphilia may be underdiagnosed in women, this absence of paraphilia could also indicate that perhaps female sex offenders less often have sexual motives when compared with male sex offenders (O'Connor, 1987). More research into the sexual and other motives of female sex offenders appears warranted.

This absence or smaller importance of sexual motives might also indicate that the treatment of female sex offenders should perhaps focus less on the sexual aspects of the offense, but more on other features (Lawson, 2008). For example, with specialists the treatment should focus on decreasing the susceptibility of the women with respect to their partner and to set limits or boundaries for her children and herself. With generalists, treatment should perhaps focus more on antisocial aspects. However, both groups have numerous psychological problems implying that an offense-focused treatment seems insufficient.

We conclude firstly that relatively many female sex offenders appear to specialize in sex offending. Secondly, we conclude that generalisation and specialisation appear to associate in partly similar fashion to personal and offense characteristics in female sex offenders as they are known to do in male sex offenders. There are differences too. The most striking difference is the frequently active presence of a male co-offender.

The presence of this co-offender has two implications. Firstly, the presence of a co-offender fundamentally alters the setting in which the abuse is committed, so that issues of dominance, fear, and susceptibility may take precedence over sexual or violent motives. Second, as explained above, the characteristics of the woman herself and their association with the offense may become 'blurred' with those of her co-offender. For that matter, the motives of female sex offenders, their co-offenders and the interaction between the offenders should also become a focus of future research on female sex offending. Such research would perhaps contribute most to understanding the aetiology of female sex offending.

Chapter 4 Juvenile female sex offenders: Offender and offense characteristics⁸

Almost all research on juvenile sex offending pertains to adolescent males. This study comprises all female juveniles convicted for sexual offenses in the Netherlands between 1993 and 2008 (N =66). From analysis of their court files and their criminal records, these female offenders are described in terms of demographics, family background, (psychiatric) disorders, victim characteristics and co-offending patterns. Heterogeneity in offending patterns and offending motives are studied, by using a reconstruction of the sexual offenses. Almost 60% of the juvenile female sex offenders (JFSOs) committed the abuse with someone else. Summarizing the offender motives as they emerged from offender and victim statements, five offender subtypes are identified. The findings are discussed in terms of implications for research and treatment.

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4.1 Introduction

Almost all recorded sex offending is committed by males, and a substantial part of sexual offenders are juveniles. In the Netherlands, the country where the present study took place, about 3200 sex offenders were recorded by the police in 2009: 672 (21%) of these offenders were juveniles (Heer-de Lang & Kalidien, 2010). Only 11 (1.6%) of these juvenile sex offenders were females. Partly because so few females are prosecuted and convicted for sex offending, very little is known about female sex offending, its prevalence, etiology and treatment outcome. Overall, it is estimated that less than 3% of all sex offending is committed by females (Cortoni, Hanson, & Coache, 2010). However, self-report studies – although mostly addressing the broader category of sexual aggression – indicate that the proportion of female abusers who do not come to the attention of law enforcement may be greater than male abusers (see e.g. Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Slotboom, Hendriks, & Verbruggen, 2011). Scholars have suggested that sexual abuse by females could be more often hidden in child caring practices such as bathing, dressing, and changing diapers (Allen, 1991; Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Kaplan & Green, 1995). It is also assumed that victims of female sex offenders feel ashamed about what happened and are reluctant to report the offense to the police for two reasons. First because both male and female victims could be fearful that officials would not believe their story (“women don’t do such things”). Second, male victims might be afraid they would not be regarded as “real men”: the “this would not happen to a real man” cliché (Deering & Mellor, 2011; Faller, 1987).

It is generally accepted that sex offenders do not constitute a homogenous group. There is heterogeneity in risk factors, criminal careers and offense characteristics, for adults as well as juveniles. It is likely that this applies to juvenile female sex offenders too. Thus, to understand the etiology of juvenile sexual offending and to be able to tailor treatment, it is necessary to take into account this heterogeneity. While typologies of adult female sex offenders have been developed to address this, and, to some extent, empirically validated (for an overview see Wijkman, Bijleveld and Hendriks, 2010), empirical support for juvenile female sex offenders (JFSOs) has been scant.

Mathews, Hunter and Vuz (1997) developed a provisional typology (N= 67) of juvenile female sex offenders. This typology was based on a clinical sample and all offenders were solo-offenders. Three subtypes were outlined: first, a group of girls who had abused young children during baby-sitting situations. The characteristics of such “babysitter-abuse” were also described by Fehrenbach and Monastersky (1988) and Roe-Sepowitz and Krysik (2008). The second subtype of offenders projected their own experiences of sexual abuse on their own brothers/sisters or peers. This reflects some of the theorizing about

intergenerational transmission: the victim becomes an offender (Burton, Miller, & Shill, 2002; Higgs, Canavan, & Meyer III, 1992). The third subtype consisted of more severely disordered offenders, showing high levels of trauma, individual and family psychopathology and dysfunction, and an early onset of severe abuse and neglect. High levels of traumatization have been reported in multiple studies; for sexual abuse, percentages vary from 50-100% (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Frey, 2010; Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2006a). As these subtypes are not mutually exclusive, and are, moreover, based on clinical samples, usefulness for theory development and practice may be limited.

Juvenile female sexual offenders, being adolescents, are experiencing maturation at a cognitive, emotional and social level (Hunter, Becker, & Lexier, 2006). Because of this developing and maturing, it is presumably more adequate to compare them with their male juvenile counterparts, who are in a comparable maturation process, than with adult female sex offenders, who are in a different life stage. Quite a number of typologies of juvenile male sex offenders (JSOs) have been developed, in different ways and based on different offender- and offense characteristics. A first group of typologies is based on the *criminal career history*. Offenders in such typologies may be once-only offenders (they commit only one sex offense), specialists (they commit multiple sex offenses) or generalists (offenders commit, next to the sex offense(s), also non-sexual offenses) (Becker & Kaplan, 1988; Butler & Seto, 2002). Another classification is based on the *type of offense*: hands-on (when there is physical contact between the offender and the victim) or hands-off (when there is no physical contact, like child pornography or flashing) (Fehrenbach, Smith, Monastersky, & Deisher, 1986). Thirdly, typologies have been derived based on the *relationship between the offender and the victim*, for example incest offenders (when the victim is a family member of the offender) versus non-incest offenders (when the victim is a non-family member) (O'Brien, 1991; Worling, 1995). Fourthly, differences are based on the *age difference with the victim*: peer abusers are then often contrasted with child abusers. Two criteria are used for labeling an offender a child abuser: first, the gap between offender and victim is five years or more and second, the child shows no physical signs of the onset of puberty (Connolly & Woollons, 2008; Gunbya & Woodhams, 2010; Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2006b; Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2003). Lastly, peers play an important role in juvenile sexual and non-sexual offending. The presence of a co-offender is thus often also used as a distinction: the offender can commit the offense by himself or it can be committed together in a group of same-sex or mixed-sex offenders (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Harkins & Dixon, 2009; Hauffe & Porter, 2009; Weerman, 2011).

Although female sex offending is in all likelihood (much) less prevalent than male sex offending, it is important to study female juveniles who committed

sexual offenses. First, studies and thus information – apart from a number of studies on atypical clinical samples - are scarce so little is known about this phenomenon. Studying female juveniles convicted for sexual offenses is important, second, from a theoretical point of view: it is uncertain that theories on male juvenile sex offending can be generalized to female juvenile sex offenders. JFSOs shall in all likelihood share factors with juvenile male sexual offending, but may differ in important areas too. More knowledge about etiology is needed too from the perspective of treatment.

This study attempts to provide information on female juveniles convicted for sexual offenses. We expect that some of the motives, victim, offense and criminal career characteristics that were found for their male counterparts will emerge for this group too. For instance, as they are juveniles, we would expect that many JFSOs also commit the sex offense in a group. However, we also expect particular characteristics of juvenile female sex offenders to emerge, related to their gender roles. For instance, according to Mathews et al (1997), a considerable number of JFSOs abuse children during babysitting, and we expect to find the same too. Secondly, we will investigate heterogeneity in juvenile female sex offenders. To do so, we will describe pertinent subgroups or subtypes that emerge from our analysis, seeking for these subtypes in exploratory fashion, and investigate to what extent they differ on victim, offense and background characteristics.

Our study adds to the extant literature in several ways. We will study all female juvenile sex offenders who became known to the Netherlands criminal justice authorities during a period of 15 years. As such we study, in a statistical sense, an entire population. This means that our sample selection process is probably less biased because offenders with disorders are less overrepresented as they are bound to be in the previously studied clinical samples. Secondly, our sample, while small in an absolute sense, is large as compared to most other studies (Vandiver, 2010) and relatively large given the extremely low incidence of convictions for sex offending by juvenile females. Furthermore, we have validated psychological and background information on these females from screenings by psychologists and psychiatrists carried out at the request of the courts. We also have complete criminal career information on all females. We thus have rich and validated information on several domains pertinent to sex offending.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Sample

For this study, we started out with information on 143 cases recorded between 1993 and 2008 with the Netherlands central prosecution service entailing a juvenile female defendant of at least one sexual offense. Of these 143 recorded cases, 129 cases could be linked to a unique defendant rap sheet. Fourteen cases could not be linked: some were male offenders or they were too young (aged under 12) or too old (above 18 years) to be called JFSOs. Of these 129 suspects 13 were acquitted and 22 were dismissed by the prosecutor for 'technical reasons', which implies that the prosecutor drops the case as he or she believes that there is insufficient evidence and the case will end up in acquittal, so these 35 cases were not included in the sample. This resulted in 94 unique juvenile female sex offenders. Some of these (N=26) were hands-off offenders only, convicted mainly for human trafficking, child pornography and indecent exposure. These hand-off offenders were excluded from the sample, because it's very likely they differ from hands-on offenders concerning personal characteristics and offense characteristics like offense motivation and victim preference.

The Netherlands does not have plea bargaining, so the offense categorization under which an offense is recorded can be assumed to reflect the actual offense. Our final research group contains 68 juvenile females who were convicted for at least one hands-on sexual offense. For some of these girls, their case was dismissed by the prosecutor for policy reasons, such as that the defendant had started therapy or had improved relations with the victim. Cases under this uniquely Dutch system of prosecutorial expediency are counted as convicted cases in academic research in the Netherlands (Wartna, Blom, & Tollenaar, 2008). Two court files were already destroyed, so we had ultimately complete information on 66 juvenile female sex offenders.

The vast majority of perpetrators (74%) were ethnic Dutch. The remaining 26% had a different ethnicity and came from Surinam (N=11), the Netherlands Antilles (N=2) or had a mixed ethnicity (N=4)). The most common final educational level was lower general secondary education (N=24), or special education (N=23). At the time of the sampling offense the juvenile females were on average 14.2 years (SD = 2.0, range = 10.9).

4.2.2 Variables and measurement instruments

From the court files, offender and offense variables were coded using the scoring tool for sex offenders previously developed and used extensively in various studies by Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006b) and Wijkman et al. (2010), supplemented by a number of variables that are particularly important for JFSOs, such as experiences of physical or sexual abuse, previous contacts with child protection services and, relationship with, and characteristics of any co-offender(s). Court files in the Netherlands always contain the charge as well as the judicial decision, in which it is specified as to what offense the defendant was charged with. Each court file contains an exact description of the physical acts committed; against which victims, whose names and dates and places of births are given as well as their relation to the offender, where the offending took place and at what dates and times. Most studied court file contained transcripts of the police hearings of the offender, reports by each involved police officer of his or her findings (*proces verbaal*) in each phase of the case, victim and sometimes witness statements. If the prosecutor, judge, or the lawyer requested psychological or psychiatric screening, the court file also contains the psychiatric and/or psychological reports. Such screenings are always carried out by certified forensic psychologists and psychiatrists. Reports are based on clinical judgment as well on standard validated tests used in Dutch clinical assessments by psychologists and/or psychiatrists, such as the Raven, the WISC and the MMPI-A; however, the use of these tests varied over files and over the years studied.

Offender characteristics are features such as intelligence level, school performance, neuroticism, self-esteem, suggestibility and psychopathology, and family characteristics (such as experienced separations, relatives they live with, violence between parents), intimate relationships, and alcohol or drugs abuse. Offense characteristics include the number of co-offenders/accomplices, the nature of the sexual acts, use of violence during the crime, relationship between offender and victim, number of victims, age and sex of the victim.

The information in the court files was coded by the first author of this paper. All court files were coded before criminal career information was retrieved from the centralized criminal record files at the Netherlands JustId Office in Almelo to prevent bias in the scoring process. Criminal career features were retrieved from criminal records. Permission for this study had been obtained from the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Justice.

4.2.3 Method of analysis

For the description of the characteristics of the perpetrators, victims and the offenses as noted in the criminal and judicial records we used simple frequency counts. Not all variables could be coded for all females. This is so because, in the Netherlands, the prosecutor or the defense may only request psychological or psychiatric screening if psychological issues are supposed to be relevant for judging culpability or the need for treatment. As such, psychological and/or psychiatric screening had been requested for a subset of all 66 girls (N= 31). Whenever we report characteristics that are supposed to be elevated in the subset that did receive screening, such as disorders, we do not presume that the percentage measured in the screened group can be generalized to the entire sample and simply report the actual number of cases diagnosed with a disorder (for example, "13 girls were diagnosed with ADHD"). First, we described the characteristics of offenders, victims and offenses. After this, the heterogeneity of the females was examined in two different ways. We started with a comparison of the solo- and group offenders. Because of the large (38) number of comparisons, the risk for a Type-I error increases. Therefore, only significant results at the .01 level are reported.

Next, we studied heterogeneity in the offending motives as described in the court files. As a direction for coding and data analysis concerning the motives of the offenders, we used an approach based on Grounded Theory (Glaser, 2008) mixed with content analysis. This theory assumes that there is not a specific theoretical starting point prior to the coding and analysis. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) it is necessary for concepts and theories to be grounded and it is essential that they are based on empirical research. Grounded theory results from the data, and examples as presented in this study have their origins in the data; they aren't used to illustrate existing theories. So, data analysis based on the grounded theory, is a process that systematically reviews the qualitative information found in the courtfiles, with the intention to identify core concepts and their relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To do so, we first noted as factually as possible all statements as given by the offender and the victim(s), and all the findings as expressed by police officers and reports as written by (forensic) clinicians. Because the perspective of the offender was primarily obtained after they had been charged with the sex offense, it could be possible that claims about group pressure are a defense strategy or a (sub)conscious use of neutralization techniques. Therefore, whenever statements were inconsistent or unclear, we let the statements by the victim and/or findings by criminal justice officials prevail. This resulted in a reconstruction of each offense, containing information on the initiation, continuation and ending of the offense, information on (all) offender(s)

motives as expressed at hearings and through acts and expressions during the offense and victim characteristics. Next, we combined offenders and their offenses into groups with similar offending 'themes', i.e. context (the onset, course and ending of the offense, interaction between victim and offender, and offenders themselves) and motives. After constructing these subtypes, the second and third author read the coding forms and attempted to allocate all JFSOs to one of the subtypes. After reviewing the outcomes, the coding instructions were altered in the sense that the proximal motive would be considered the dominant, and that girls with a disorder would only be coded in the 'Disorder'-category if the disorder had a clear relation to the properties of the offense. After thus coding, re-viewing and recoding all allocations, an agreement of 91%, based on three observers was accomplished. Nine offenders were unclassifiable because too little or contradictory information on the offenses and the offenders' motives was present in the court files.

A number of qualitative case descriptions are added when they are illustrative for the offender subtypes we distinguished. These case descriptions have not only been anonymized, but have also been deliberately altered in non-essential aspects to prevent recognition of offenders and/or victims. This is because confidentiality was the condition under which we were allowed to use the data and some of these cases had received media attention in the Netherlands.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Offender characteristics

Almost 35% of the girls functioned at borderline-intellectual level (IQ 71-84) or had mild mental retardation (IQ 50-70). The moral development of more than a third (35%) was judged as below average. Problems with anger-management (24%) or authority (24%) were reported as well. A third had shown antisocial behavior in childhood.

Based on the psychological and psychiatric reports 17 girls were diagnosed as having a conduct or psychiatric disorder, namely CD (N=10), ODD (N=3), ADHD (N=2) and anxiety disorders (N=2). Some girls had comorbid mental disorders. For one girl there were suspicions of a paraphilia. Ten girls showed signs of a personality disorder. Apart from ADHD, for which the prevalence does not appear elevated (Tuithof, ten Have, van den Brink, Vollebergh, & de Graaf, 2012), we were unable to find norm scores for these disorders concerning adolescent females, so we cannot gauge these findings. Given the small absolute numbers, caution is warranted interpreting them.

About a third of the girls (36%) came from a two-parent family, 40% had divorced parents and four girls reported a different family background. For 12 girls

there was no information about their family background. A quarter of the families of the girls had been in contact with child support or child protection agencies. Serious violence between parents or caregivers was reported by 17%, and 18% said they had witnessed the use of violence by parents towards other family members.

Obvious diffuse sexual boundaries in the family were reported by 14% of the girls; for example parents had sexual intercourse while the girl was in the same room or parents watched porn-movies in the presence of their children. Three girls reported they had been raised exactly the opposite way, having been punished when they asked about sex or romantic relationships.

One third of the girls reported they had been emotionally and/or pedagogically neglected, and 33% reported having been abused physically and/or emotionally. Sexual abuse was reported by 37% of all girls; a third of this sexual abuse was intrafamilial (12% of all girls). The average age the sexual abuse started was 8.5 years, and the duration of the abuse varied between once-only and five years. So, many girls came from a problematic family background reporting high levels of neglect, and (especially sexual) abuse victimization.

About 18% said they have ever used soft/hard drugs and 21% have ever used alcohol. About a quarter reported they had committed one or more offenses prior to the sex offense. These offenses were theft, violent offenses, and vandalism. In summary, for only 27% of the girls no problems were reported in the above-mentioned domains (e.g. presence of disorders, experiences of abuse/neglect, self-mutilation, and problems with authorities or anger management).

4.3.2 Victim and offense characteristics

The legal qualification of the index crimes, and a description of what that qualification entails under Dutch law, is shown in Table 4.1. If a girl was recorded under multiple penal codes, we report the offense that carries the heaviest sentence.

Table 4.1. Legal qualification of index sexual crimes

Article penal code (type of sexual offense)	n	percentage
242 (rape)	20	30.3
244 (sexual intercourse with person <12 years)	7	10.6
245 (sexual intercourse with person 12-16 years)	2	3.0
246 (sexual assault)	20	30.3
247 (sexual abuse of a minor)	13	19.7
249 (sexual acts with abuse of authority)	4	6.1
	66	100%

Almost 60% of the girls committed the abuse with another person. In 9% of these group offender cases, the (ex)-boyfriend was the co-offender; the majority of the co-offenders were peers. In 95% of the group offender cases, a male was involved. The role of the involved male varied from active to observing the offense. About 74% of the co-offending girls had an active, participating role during the group offense, for example by participating in the sexual acts or they battered or threatened the victim.

The median age of the victims was 13 years (range = 0-23 years): 42.4% aged under 12, 36.4% aged between 12-16, and 21.2% aged above 16. Offenders were on average 2.3 years older than the victims, but there were many outliers: some girls were nine years younger than the victim, while others where 16 years older. The girls abused mostly one victim: 73% of the girls had one victim, 23% abused two to five victims, and three girls victimized more than five persons. About 68% abused a girl, 20% abused a boy/man, and 12% had male as well as female victims. The majority (78%) of the girls abused a friend/acquaintance, 11% a (child) relative, and 11% a stranger. More than 45% of the girls used (severe) physical and/or verbal violence accompanying the sexual offense, such as insulting, hitting, or strangling the victim.

4.3.3 Heterogeneity: group and solo offenders

In order to investigate heterogeneity, 38 chi-square analyses were conducted to investigate whether solo offenders and group offenders differed on personality, offense, and victim characteristics. These analyses (only the significant results are reported) revealed that solo offenders experienced more often obvious diffuse sexual boundaries within the family ($\chi^2 (1) = 9.22, p < .005$), and committed the sex offense more often at the house of the victim ($\chi^2 (1) = 14.22, p < .01$). For group offenders, the offense was significantly more a once-only offense ($\chi^2 (1) = 14.95, p < .001$). Furthermore, their victims resisted significantly more ($\chi^2 (1) = 12.48, p < .005$) which is probably explained by the fact that their victims were more often older than 12 years ($\chi^2 (1) = 21.13, p < .001$).

4.3.4 Heterogeneity: offending motives

The motives of the offenders for the offense were derived from the data through grounded theory, and five distinct themes/subtypes emerged.

The largest group (N=23) was the *group pressure* subtype. This prototype consisted of girls who reported they were afraid of their co-offenders and therefore co-offended, and girls who said they 'were dragged into' the offense. Cases in which girls reported or the case descriptions showed that the offense was a pastime in which the several offenders participated in group-wise fashion, and 'had fun' while committing the offense, were also classified as such. This prototype can be illustrated with the following:

D, a 15-year-old girl was living in a foster home. In her room, two girls and a boy verbally threatened her; they pushed a small bottle of water into her vagina and forced her to drink urine. All three offenders said they did it because they were afraid of the other offenders.

F, an 11-year-old girl, moved to a new neighborhood. The kids there told her she could belong to their peer-group, but in return for this she had to perform some acts. The 12 kids forced her to put her finger in her vagina and anus, to lick the door of the shed and she had to pole-dance with a streetlight. While F was performing all the acts, the kids were laughing at the victim and humiliated her

While some of the offenses in the other subtypes, for example the emotion regulation problem subtype (the second subtype), or the profit subtype (the fourth subtype), can be group offenses too, the differences with the offenses in this first subtype is that here the group process has been identified as the main reason why the offense took place.

The second largest subtype (N=16) consisted of girls with *emotion regulation problems*. These females had expressed motivations like taking revenge on rival female peers, decreasing anger or having fun by humiliating other people, and taking advantage of physically/psychologically vulnerable children. The following illustrates the offenses typically committed by girls in this subtype:

A, a 15-year-old girl was together with one of her female peers, B, walking in the city. They spotted Z, an acquaintance, who was now having an affair with A's former boyfriend. A and B decided to teach Z a lesson and invited the girl for a drink. When they were

walking through a park, they hit the girl and forced her to undress herself. A forced the girl, by yelling and shouting, to put sticks into her own vagina. As this was happening, three male peers were crossing the park and they saw the three girls. A told the boys it was okay to rape Z because she was a slut after all. One of the boys raped Z and after this, they all left Z behind, bleeding heavily.

Three girls were hanging around at their schoolyard. An intellectually disabled boy walked by and insulted one of their mothers. One girl started to beat up the boy and the other two joined her. They also forced him (by grasping his arm) to masturbate, while they were insulting him.

The third subtype (N=9) consisted of girls who committed the offense because of *sexual experimentation*. They do not exactly know how to sexually behave and according to this, consequently they display sexual aggressive behavior:

K, a 14-year-old girl was playing the game 'truth-or-dare' with Z, the girl-next-door. When Z did not want to tell the truth, K told her to lick her vagina and her breasts. She noted Z didn't like it, but decided not to quit.

L, a 13-year-old girl, was curious how it felt to kiss somebody. She asked her parents, and they told her it was inappropriate to talk about such things. One time, while babysitting, she threatened the victim and put her fingers violently into the vagina of the female victim causing severe injuries. L told the clinician it was out of curiosity.

The fourth subtype (N=4) consisted of girls who were extremely self-centered and committed the offense because they themselves would *profit* from it (sexually or financially):

The mother of G, a 16-year-old girl, was frequently away from home. It was well known that G was a promiscuous girl and a lot of men came to her house. G forced, using verbal threats, two female friends to have sex with some men "If I can have sex with those men, than they can have it too". Sometimes men gave her money for the sex they had with the girls. The victims were very much afraid of G and were sometimes hit by her. G told the

clinician that she had done nothing wrong and that she did not understand why the girls went to the police.

H, a 17-year-old girl wanted to experience a threesome. Her boyfriend, K, knew this and together they picked up another couple in a pub, after doping them with alcohol and speed. When they all were at the couple's home, the female victim refused to have sex with H. K threatened to shoot her boyfriend if she didn't have sex with H. At gun-point, the female victim had oral sex with H, while K was watching. H told the police it all was a little game and the girl should not be so fussy about it.

Finally, five girls committed the offense while induced by a psychiatric disorder. Three of them were diagnosed with a psychotic disorder with auditory hallucinations and hearing voices, one girl committed the offense probably as a result of her dissociative disorder and for a fifth girl a paraphilia was suspected.

M, a 13 year-old girl was playing with her younger brothers. One of them said for fun he wanted to have sex with the girl who was playing outside their house. M dragged the girl into their house, beat her up with a hockey stick and forced her to undress herself, so her brother could have sex with her. Her brother was shocked by what happened and told M it was only a joke. Afterwards M told the clinician she was hearing voices who instructed her to assault the girl.

N, a 15 year-old girl, abused two children during babysitting. She explained it was a compulsive act, which she couldn't resist. If she saw a baby, the only thing she wanted to know, was what was underneath his diapers and she wanted to touch and lick the baby's genitals.

The subtypes we identified from our grounded theory analyses concerning the offenses, offender and victim characteristics, are cross-tabulated with solo- and group offenders in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Subtypes and group versus solo offending

Subtypes	Solo offender	Co-offender	Total N	Percentage
Emotion regulation	8	8	16	24.3%
Group pressure	-	23	23	34.8%
For profit	3	1	4	6.1%
Experimentation	7	2	9	13.6%
Disorder	4	1	5	7.6%
Not classifiable	6	3	9	13.6%
Total	28	38	66	100%

From table 4.2 we see that there are no marked associations between the manner in which the offense was carried out (group or solo) and the motive given. Those committing the offense because of group pressure are by definition group offenders, so they were neglected in the following two χ^2 analyses, as well as the non-classifiable subtype. There was no significant association between the subtypes and group/solo offending ($\chi^2(3) = 2.89, p = .41$). When the subtypes are dichotomized (present disorder or present experimental type, versus all the remaining subtypes (emotion regulation problems, group pressure and for profit), the solo-offenders are significant more the experimental type or have a disorder, $\chi^2(1) = 12.51, p < .001$.

4.4 Discussion

We studied a sample of female juveniles convicted for sexual offenses in the Netherlands. While the sample size was small in an absolute sense, these girls comprise all hands-on juvenile female sex offenders known to the criminal justice authorities in the Netherlands in the period 1993-2008; as such, in a statistical sense, they constitute a population. We were able to collect rich data which is derived from empirically validated psychodiagnostic tests. Also, using offender and victim statements and information collected by the criminal justice authorities as laid down in the court files, we were able to reconstruct the offenses, and to identify a number of offender and offense subtypes.

Summarizing, three findings stand out. JFSOs emerge as a traumatized group, who remarkably often have co-offenders, and show heterogeneity in motives and crimes.

The females appear burdened in terms of trauma, victimization, and disorders. Only 27% of the girls reported no problems, which is comparable with the findings of Kubik, Hecker and Righthand (2003). Although they did not focus on traumatic experiences, Seto and Lalumière (2010) reported that JMSOs also experienced significantly more experiences of abuse, neglect, family problems and attachment issues when compared with juvenile non-sex offenders. The high prevalence of

traumatic experiences of the JFSOs studied here appears therefore in line with these findings. However, in the sample studied here, about 37% of all girls reported having been sexually abused, which is considerably lower than other studies about JFSOs reporting victimization rates ranging from 50-100% (Frey, 2010). Sexual victimization thus appears less prominent than emerged from other studies. This difference may have been caused by the fact that we studied a non-clinical sample. Additionally, about a third of the girls were diagnosed with a disorder. Because of a lack of reliable and comparable studies about adolescent females, and for lack of norm values on almost all measures, we cannot draw any conclusions about whether this prevalence rate is higher than in the average Dutch juvenile female population.

In male juvenile sex offenders, group sex offenses constitute about a third of all sex offenses committed (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003). Thus, the prevalence of group sex offending in this group of juvenile females (60%) appears strikingly elevated. A similar elevated prevalence (63%) was reported for convicted adult female sex offenders (Wijkman et al., 2010). However, most co-offenders of adult female sex offenders were romantic partners, while most co-offenders of the adolescent females we studied were acquaintances and friends. Obviously, not many juveniles do already have an intimate partner to co-offend with. In addition, juveniles in general commit a lot of their offenses together with their peers (Warr, 2002). Furthermore, with females being generally less physically strong than males, enlisting a co-offender may be a rational strategy or even necessary to accomplish the offense. Thus, sexual co-offending – which was shown to have ‘entertainment value’ for juvenile males (Bijleveld, Weerman, Looije & Hendriks, 2007) – may serve more utilitarian purposes in juvenile females. The large amount of co-offending we found is different than it appears from previous studies, which mainly reported solo-offending. Only Vandiver (2010) studied sexual co-offending of males as well as females: in her sample about 50% of the girls acted with a co-offender. We found a number of well-interpretable differences between solo offenders and co-offenders. Solo-offenders appeared more burdened in terms of trauma and their offending also appeared less often a once-only occurrence than for group offenders. Thus, solo offenders appear, just as was found for JMSO’s (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2003), more burdened and disturbed than group offenders,

For group offenses committed by male juveniles it was found that these offenses were generally more violent (Bijleveld, Weerman, Looije, & Hendriks, 2007). This ‘social amplification effect’ of strengthening group processes (Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Vandiver, 2010), was only partially found in our study group: offenders were more often convicted for rape but these offenses were not particularly more violent. Again, the presence of co-offenders may have played a different role for these females than they did for JMSOs. In fact, a number of JFSOs

reported they wanted 'to teach her [the victim] a lesson', they wanted 'revenge'. Being female themselves, they might have picked the group-wise and public sexual humiliation to achieve their goal.

The five subtypes we identified partially overlap with existing subtypes. A small group of females who committed the offense for their own gratification, was also reported by Vandiver (2010), although she found only females with a simply economic motivation; we found in our study also females who abused for their own sexual gratification. Also, a (small) group committed the offense during babysitting or out of sexual experimentation. Our 'babysitting' group is however relatively smaller than found in other studies (Fehrenbach & Monastersky, 1988; Mathews, Hunter, & Vuz, 1997). This difference can be caused by the fact we have a judicial sample, in which offenses reported by victims themselves may be overrepresented. By contrast other studies on clinical samples may have overrepresented on females who confess sexual crimes during treatment, which may more often be such 'babysitting-offenses'.

Our emotion regulation subtype is difficult to match with previous female sex offender studies, but there are similarities with the study of Kubik (2003), who found that sexual offending girls had more deviant beliefs and attitudes about sexual offending than non-offending/ non-sexual offending girls. Furthermore, when one examines this subtype, one could raise the question if there are two different subtypes namely reactive aggressors (girls who got the feeling they are provoked or threatened) and proactive aggressors (girls who use the offense to dominate or hurt others, or for instrumental gain) (Barker, Tremblay, Nagin, Vitaro, & Lacourse, 2006). However, because of the small numbers in this subtype we decided not to further divide this subtype.

One of the limitations of our study is sample size. This limitation is difficult to overcome as we studied all JFSOs known to the criminal justice authorities since 1993 in the Netherlands. Although our sample size is small in an absolute sense, when we compare it with other research about JFSOs it is one of the largest. Several studies included fewer than 30 in their sample, and the maximum was 67 females (Vandiver, 2010). Another limitation is that we were unable to make a systematic comparison with JMSOs and with juvenile female non-sex offenders, so statements about distinctive features for JFSOs are difficult to make. Thirdly, our sample consisted of JFSOs who were convicted for their sexual offense. It is likely that only the more severe offenses are reported to the judicial authorities, or those sexual offenses which severely shocked people 'because a female was involved'. Also, it is possible that offenses with older victims are overrepresented because these victims are able to report the offense to the police. Moreover, statements about victimization and the offenders' perception of the offense were primarily obtained from the juvenile females after they had been charged with the sex

offense. Thus, defense strategies or neutralization techniques may have influenced the statements. It is equally possible that the young female defendants were afraid or ashamed to report any sexual feelings while committing the offense. It is possible that the proportion of girls who indicated they were sexually aroused before or during the offense is an underestimate. Lastly, while the use of grounded theory is generally perceived as a valid way of dealing the problem of categorizing offender subtypes, it is unsure how reliable such a categorization is. Because of our small sample size, validation through a cluster-type of analysis would likely be unstable. We therefore recommend that our analysis be extended using an enlarged sample (for instance by combining data from several countries) to quantify the attributes found in the qualitative analysis.

Our study shows there is, just like (juvenile) male sex offenders, heterogeneity in JFSOs. This heterogeneity is not only theoretically interesting but also relevant for clinical practice. Treatment should be tailored to the needs of the offender. When we keep in mind that many females are burdened in terms of trauma and that the prevalence of disorders appears elevated, interventions may need to address these issues first. Previous studies about delinquent girls have shown that traumas and disorders linked to life stressors, are strongly associated with delinquent behavior (Zahn et al., 2010); however, it is unclear for lack of a systematic comparison whether the group of JFSOs differ from female non-sex offenders on these aspects.

Even though addressing these issues can be an important part of the treatment, too much focus might only serve to reinforce a girl's belief that she has no control over her own life and thus on her offending behavior (Ford & Cortoni, 2008). Increasing the understanding of the factors which contribute to the sexual offending must be balanced with taking responsibility for sexual offending behavior (Frey, 2010). It is to be doubted whether treatment should focus on sexual re-offending prevention similarly as in males, as the level of sexual recidivism in female sex offenders is quite low - about 3% (Cortoni, Hanson, & Coache, 2010).

The reconstruction of the offenses gave indication that JFSOs may have other motivations for committing a sexual offense than JMSO's. The female offenders strikingly often reported they wanted to take revenge on female peers or decrease or express anger through the offense. Group sex offending by juvenile females appears to be committed by females with different backgrounds than their male counterparts, and from different motives. It is partly unclear what the function and role of the group is in such – extremely serious and humiliating - offenses committed by females. The role of group-processes in female juvenile sex offending appears an important next area to explore in the scant research on this small but troubled group of young offenders.

Chapter 5 Group sexual offending by juvenile females⁹

This study examined all group sexual offending cases in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2009 (N=26) in which at least one juvenile female offender (N=35) had been adjudicated. Information from court files showed that the majority of juvenile female group sexual offenders have (inter)personal problems and (sexual) abuse experiences. The aims of the offender groups in committing the offense could be categorized in three themes: harassing the victim, sexual gratification, and taking revenge. The reasons why juvenile female offenders participated in a group could be categorized into group dynamics versus instrumental reasons. The findings are contrasted with findings on juvenile male group sexual offenders. Implications of the findings for research and treatment are discussed.

⁹ This chapter has been accepted as:
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5.1 Introduction

Juvenile sexual offending is mostly committed by males. In the Netherlands, the country where the present study took place, about 850 juvenile sexual offenders were arrested by the police in 2009; 20 (2.4%) of these juvenile sexual offenders were females (Heer-de Lang & Kalidien, 2010). Partly because so few juvenile females are prosecuted or convicted for sexual offending, little is known about juvenile female sexual offending.

The few studies that are available offer information about juvenile female sexual offenders in general, but do not elaborate on important distinctions, such as between solo- and group offenders. This is an important gap as we know from previous research that there may be important differences between (adult) sexual offenders who act alone and sexual offenders who operate with co-offenders (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Hauffe & Porter, 2009; Wright & West, 1981)

In fact, adult female sexual offenders very often co-offend with a co-offender. This is usually a man, who is often their intimate partner. In the literature, co-offending rates are reported that vary between one and two thirds of female sexual offenders (Bunting, 2007; Cortoni, 2010; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004) which is much higher when compared with adult and juvenile males for whom figures ranged between 10-20 percent in the United Kingdom and Australia, and between 20-30 percent in the United States and South Africa (da Silva, Harkins, & Woodhams, 2013; Woodhams, 2009).

While there is an extensive amount of literature available about the involvement of juvenile females in gang group processes, there is to our knowledge, hardly any research that has focused on juvenile females who committed group sexual offenses. Almost all studies on juvenile female sexual offenders reported that the young women in their samples generally acted alone, or did not specify co-offending (Fehrenbach & Monastersky, 1988, Hunter et al., 2006, Kubik et al., 2003). A few researchers studied sexual co-offending of juvenile female offenders. Vandiver (2010) reported that about 50% of the juvenile females in her sample acted with a co-offender, while Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006) reported 70% co-offending. Wijkman, Bijleveld and Hendriks (2014) reported that 58% of the juvenile female sexual offenders were group offenders. McCartan et al (2010) reported only 14% co-offending. For all studies it was unclear whether this co-offender was a romantic partner of the female offender or a friend or peer. Kubik and Hecker (2005) mentioned the presence of co-offenders, but gave no further information about the extent of co-offending. Some researchers reported the presence of female sexual offenders in their sample, mostly only to help to procure the victim for the male members of the group - and paid no further attention to these females (Horvath & Kelly, 2009, Porter & Alison, 2006).

In this study, we will focus on group sexual offending by juvenile females in the Netherlands. We analyze our findings with respect to the characteristics of the juvenile group sexual offenders, the characteristics of the group sexual offense, the background and manner in which the offenses evolved and how offenders interacted with each other and with the victim (before, during and after the actual offense). We also investigate the primary aims for committing a sexual offense among the investigated juvenile females and we investigate different perspectives on why these offenders committed the sexual offense in a group. We contrast our findings with previous findings on juvenile male group sexual offenders. We analyze information from court files which contain validated data on personal characteristics as well as cross-validated offender- and victim statements. Our sample is small; however it is also complete in the sense that it comprises all juvenile female sexual offenders adjudicated in the Netherlands from 1994-2008.

5.1.1 Previous research on female juvenile sexual offenders

Frey (2010) conducted a literature review on juvenile female sexual offenders. She found that their families are characterized by moderate to severe dysfunctioning (Mathews, Hunter, & Vuz, 1997; Tardif et al., 2005) with many (>25%) shifts of caregivers (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008) and inconsistent parenting (82%) (Hickey, McCrory, Farmer, & Vizard, 2008). Reported sexual victimization varies much: from 26% (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008), to 50% (Fehrenbach & Monastersky, 1988) to 100% (Bumby & Bumby, 1997; Hunter et al., 1993). Physical abuse and neglect as reported in these studies ranges from 12% (Roe-Sepowitz & Krysik, 2008) to 91% (Hickey et al., 2008). Hickey et al. (2008) reported that 77% of the juvenile females in their sample had experienced inadequate sexual boundaries within their family, and that 49% had undergone treatment for mental health problems. Roe-Sepowitz et al (2008) reported in their extensive study that almost 30% of the females faced problems with the use of alcohol and/or drugs, 49% experienced problems at school and 53% reported delinquency before their sexual offense.

Because the majority of the studies is clinical (consisting of females who are treated for psychological problems after which in the clinical setting their roles as abuser become evident), and consists of case studies or descriptions of a limited number of young women, offense characteristics are often lacking. Some studies reported predominantly male victims (Hunter et al., 1993; Mathews et al., 1997) while others reported mainly female victims (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2006; Vandiver & Teske Jr, 2006). Most studies reported victims aged on average 11-12 years, and victims and offender were generally known to each other (Frey, 2010).

All in all, we see that previous research on juvenile female sexual offenders has reported multiple traumata like sexual and physical abuse and neglect.

Problems in domains like school, anti-social behavior and delinquency have relatively often been found.

5.1.2 Previous research on male juvenile group sexual offenders

Many studies have reported group sizes of about 2-4 offenders (De Wree, 2004, Horvath & Kelly, 2009, Porter & Alison, 2006, Woodhams et al., 2007). Some researchers reported offenders to have below average IQ-scores (Bijleveld et al., 2007, 't Hart- Kerkhoffs, 2010) while others reported the opposite (Porter & Alison, 2006). Further, offenders have often a problematic family background, with divorced parents. Offenders' school performances are relatively weak and truancy is common (Bijleveld et al., 2007, De Wree, 2004). Not much is known about the personality characteristics of juvenile male group sexual assault offenders, and some researchers reported that their personality profiles appear average and not different from other, non-sexual offenders (De Wree, 2004, Woods, 1969, Wright & West, 1981). Sexual abuse victimization of offenders themselves is reported to be low (between six and eight per cent) (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003, Hauffe & Porter, 2009). Psychiatric problems were seldom reported: 4% (Porter & Alison, 2006) to 7% (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003) .

Like group offending in general, also group sexual offending must be understood through the dynamics and processes of the group in which it is committed (Bijleveld et al., 2007, Hauffe & Porter, 2009, Wright & West, 1981). For example, male juvenile group sexual offenders more often use physical and verbal violence than male juvenile sexual solo-offenders, and this can be explained by group processes (Woodhams, 2009). Hauffe and Porter (2009) suggested that juvenile male group offenders may more likely view victims as targets for behavior that benefits their status in the group, while lone rapists may see the victim more in terms of satisfying their sexual or relationship needs. Other studies found that offenders confirm and strengthen their status within the group by beating the victim (Bijleveld et al., 2007, Harkins & Dixon, 2009). Group bonding and elevation of masculinity has been reported as motivations for group sexual offenders by several researchers, as well as excitement and adventure (Bijleveld et al., 2007, De Wree, 2004, Franklin, 2004, Horvath & Kelly, 2009). However, sexual gratification was still reportedly an important goal of the offense (Bijleveld et al., 2007, De Wree, 2004, Franklin, 2004, Horvath & Kelly, 2009).

5.1.3 Perspectives on co-offending

Previous studies on juvenile female sexual offenders reported high co-offending rates, varying between 50-60% (Vandiver, 2010, Wijkman et al., 2013). However, because not much is known about the characteristics of group sexual assault committed by juvenile females, we also do not know how to explain why and when juvenile females commit sexual offenses with others. To understand the reasons of the juvenile females for participating in a group sexual offense we build on theoretical literature about co-offending in general.

In the literature, three perspectives can be distinguished in explaining co-offending, namely group influence, social selection and the instrumental perspective (Weerman, 2003). These perspectives are used to explain juvenile co-offending, as well as co-offending in adult offenders, and to explain differences between juvenile and adult rates of co-offending. These perspectives differ in the presumed mechanisms that lead to co-offending, or the reasons why offenders co-offend.

According to the group influence perspective, co-offending is the result of group influence and group processes leading to criminal behavior. These processes can be social learning or the acquisition of criminal attitudes, or group pressure felt by the members of the group. This perspective includes the theoretical notions of Warr (2002) who described a number of mechanisms that occur within juvenile groups. First, juveniles commit their crime in a group because they are afraid to be ridiculed by the other group members if they do not participate in the offending. Second, juveniles co-offend because they want to be loyal to their group. This means that they will engage in illegal behavior to preserve or solidify a friendship and that group members will protect each other when they are confronted with the police. Finally, juveniles may co-offend because of status enhancement. They can earn prestige and respect within the group by participating in an offense.

The social selection perspective is built on the assumption that delinquent groups are formed because offenders select each other based on having the same characteristics, like low self-control or a preference for non-conventional behavior, or being in the same place and context. Co-offending happens automatically when offenders stick together by social selection and when they happen to be in the same place when an opportunity for an offense occurs.

The last perspective is the instrumental perspective in which co-offending is deliberately chosen because it leads to an easier, more profitable or less risky execution of a crime. A co-offender is selected because he or she can help to ease the execution of the offense or simply make the offense possible at all. The instrumental perspective can be seen as a more rational choice view: offenders

make a decision and in this decision they will decide if they will need co-offenders or not to complete their crime.

The mechanisms that are presumed in the social selection perspective and the instrumental perspective have been identified as prevalent among juvenile male group sexual offending (Bijleveld et al (2007)), group influence mechanisms appeared to be much less prevalent.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Sample

The data-collection for this study was conducted in several steps. First we collected information on all 143 cases registered between 1993 and 2008 with the Netherlands central prosecution service entailing a juvenile female defendant of at least one sexual offense. Of these 143 registered cases, 129 cases could be linked to a unique defendant criminal record. Fourteen cases could not be linked: some appeared to refer to male offenders or to offenders who were too young (aged under 12) or too old (above 18 years) to be classified as a juvenile. Of these 129 suspects 13 were acquitted and 22 were dismissed by the prosecutor for 'technical reasons', which implies that the prosecutor drops the case as he or she believes that there is insufficient evidence and the case will end up in acquittal. This resulted in 94 unique juvenile female sexual offenders. Some (N=28) of these were hands-off offenders only, prosecuted mainly for human trafficking, the possession and distribution of child pornography and indecent exposure.

For some of the remaining offenders, their case was dismissed by the prosecutor for policy reasons, such as that the defendant had started therapy or that the relationship with the victim had improved. Cases under this uniquely Dutch system of prosecutorial expediency are counted as convicted cases in academic research in the Netherlands (Wartna, Blom, & Tollenaar, 2008), therefore we also included these cases in the current study. Our final research group contained 66 juvenile females who had been prosecuted for at least one hands-on sexual offense. The majority of this group, 38 juveniles (58%), committed one or more offenses with other offenders, while 28 females committed the offense alone (and were excluded from the current analyses). For these 38 female group sexual offenders we analyzed their court files, and as far as possible we tried to collect information about their co-offenders from these court files. For three offenders, the court file had been destroyed because of archival laws, so we finally used data on 35 juvenile female sexual offenders. They had offended in 26 different offender groups (defined as two or more offenders, in line with previous research about sexual co-offending, e.g., Horvath & Kelly, 2009). Apart from these 35 juvenile female offenders, the case files also included 32 juvenile male co-offenders, 12

adult male co-offenders, and 3 adult female co-offenders. These offenders are not included in the sample but were important to understand the context of the offense.

The vast majority of the juvenile female group sexual offenders (71%) were ethnic Dutch. The remaining 29% were of Surinamese descent. The most common final educational level was lower general secondary education (N=14), or special education (N=9). At the time of the group sexual offense the juvenile females were on average 15 years (SD = 1.6, range = 5.3).

5.2.2 Variables and measurement instruments

Offender and offense variables were scored from the court files, using the scoring tool for sexual offenders previously developed and used extensively in various studies by Hendriks and Bijleveld (2006) and by Wijkman et al. (2010) for studying juvenile male and adult female sexual offenders. This tool consists of approximately 130 variables that cover personality characteristics, family functioning, traumatic experiences, school functioning, previous delinquency and information about the offense characteristics. This tool was supplemented with a number of variables that are particularly important for this study on juvenile female group sexual offenders, such as experiences of physical or sexual abuse, sexual risky behavior and relationships with and characteristics of any co-offender(s). It was also supplemented with 45 variables covering the variables of the group process: what happened in the group before, during and after the offense. Court files in the Netherlands always contain the charge as well as the judicial decision, in which it is specified as to what offense the defendant was charged with and was found guilty of, as well as a verbal description of what behavioral acts were declared proven by the court. Each court file contains a detailed charge by the prosecutor, which lists the acts purportedly committed by the defendant. It also entails an exact description of the physical acts committed; information about victim(s) as well as their relation to the offender, where the offense took place and on what date and time. Almost every court file contained transcripts of the police hearings of the offenders, reports by police officers in various phases of the case, victim statements and sometimes witness statements. If the prosecutor, judge, or the lawyer had requested psychological or psychiatric screening, the court file also contained the psychiatric and/or psychological reports. Such screenings are always carried out by certified forensic psychologists and psychiatrists. Reports are based on clinical judgment as well as on standard validated tests used in Dutch clinical assessments by (forensic) psychologists and/or psychiatrists, such as the Raven, the WISC and the MMPI-A; however, the tests that were used varied between files and changed during the years that were covered by the current study. Moral development was mostly measured by clinical judgment of the certified forensic psychologist and

psychiatrist. They asked the offender questions with which they could estimate the level of victim empathy and whether the offender regrets what she had done. These questions were often summarized and labeled as moral development.

Offender characteristics coded are intelligence level, school performance, neuroticism, self-esteem, suggestibility and psychopathology, and family characteristics (such as experienced separations, relatives offenders lived with, violence between parents), intimate relationships, and alcohol or drugs abuse. Offense characteristics include the number of co-offenders/accomplices, the nature of the sexual acts, use of violence during the crime, relationship between offenders and victim, number of victims, age and sex of the victim.

Finally, we reconstructed each offense (how it evolved and how the offenders interacted with each other and with the victim) from the court files. In assembling the reconstructions, we noted as factually as possible all behavior and communication between the offenders shortly before, during and shortly after the offense. Not all offense situations could be reconstructed to every detail: sometimes the court files lacked clarity about the (leading) role of the offenders, there was not enough information available about all offenders or offenders' statements were inconsistent. Whenever statements were inconsistent or unclear, we let the statements by the victim and/or findings by criminal justice officials prevail.

The results as reported in this study are a description of the characteristics of the offenders at the time of the group sexual offending. All court files, which contained the case number under which the court file at the criminal courts was stored, were scored before criminal career information was retrieved from rap sheets held at the centralized criminal record files office (the Netherlands JustId Office in Almelo) to prevent bias in the scoring process. Permission for this study had been obtained from the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Justice.

5.2.3 Method of analysis

The first step in the data analysis is to describe the characteristics of the juvenile female offenders, the offender groups, their victims and their offenses. For the description of the characteristics of the perpetrators, victims and the offenses as noted in the criminal and judicial records, we present simple frequency counts. Some variables could not be scored for all females. This is because, in the Netherlands, the prosecutor or the defense may only request psychological or psychiatric screening if psychological issues are supposed to be relevant for judging culpability or the need for treatment. Therefore, psychological and/or psychiatric screening had been requested for a subset of all 35 juvenile females. Whenever we report characteristics that may be supposed to be elevated in the subset that did receive screening, such as disorders, we do not presume that the percentage measured in the screened group can be generalized to the entire sample and simply report the actual number of cases diagnosed with a disorder (for example, "13 juvenile females were diagnosed with ADHD").

After the description, we analyze the offense situation in a more extensive way to discern the interaction between offenders, the aim of the sexual offense and the reasons why the offenders committed the offense in a group. For these analyses, we build on the 'reconstructions' of each offense, containing information on the initiation, continuation and ending of the offense, information on all offenders' motives as expressed at hearings and through acts and expressions during the offense, and victim characteristics. We combined offenders and their offenses into groups with similar offending purposes based on the context and sequence of the events during the offenses (the onset, course and ending of the offense, interaction between victim and offender, and offenders themselves). Since it was in most cases unclear who initiated the offense (offenders denied their involvement, or they were accusing each other of starting the offense) we decided to take the most often mentioned aim as the purpose of the group, and not the aim of each offender separately for committing the offense. There was one group for which it turned out impossible to reconstruct this, so we have the aims of 25 groups. These analyses resulted in a small number of relatively homogeneous offending 'themes', predominantly based on the expressed aims. The interrater-reliability, measured as percentage agreement, of this analysis was 0.84.

After constructing the aim of the group for committing the offense the second and third author (both criminologists) read the coding forms and allocated all offender groups to one of the themes. After coding, re-viewing and recoding all allocations, there was agreement about the general themes. The interrater- reliability, again measured as percentage agreement, of this analysis was 0.88

Finally, we coded the main reasons (based on the general perspectives on co-offending) for the juvenile female offenders to commit the offense with (a) co-offender(s). We started with the three perspectives as mentioned in the introduction. This coding was sometimes problematic. Because court files are primarily designed to assist the prosecutor in the criminal proceedings and not to reconstruct group dynamics, it was difficult to distinguish the group influence perspective from the social selection perspective. There was often unclarity about the timing of an eventual group influence, whether the group originated shortly before the offense or whether the group had its origins long before the offense and offenders were also engaged in conventional activities. Thus, during the reviewing and recoding, we decided to combine the group influence perspective and the social selection perspective and rephrased this as the group dynamics perspective (to a certain extent, both group influences and social selection are based on group dynamics). So, in the end we coded two main reasons for co-offending: group dynamics and instrumental considerations. For two offenders, we could not classify their reasons for co-offending, because too little or unclear information on the offenses and the formation of the group was present in the court files.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Characteristics of the offender groups

The 35 juvenile females had offended in 26 offender groups comprising in total 82 offenders. In all but two groups, both male and female offenders were involved. The average size of the offender groups was 3 offenders. The smallest groups consisted of 2 offenders, while the largest consisted of 7 offenders. The average age of all offenders was 16.9 (median = 15, modus = 14, minimum = 10, maximum = 56). Fifteen groups (58%) consisted of only ethnic Dutch offenders, 5 groups (19%) had a completely non-ethnic Dutch background, and 6 groups (23%) had a mixed background. Ten groups constituted a stable group, which means that they were seeing each other on a regular basis: they were for example romantic partners, siblings living in the same house, or juvenile females who were each other's most intimate friend. All offenders were acquaintances or relatives of each other.

Five groups offended against more than one victim, with a maximum of four victims. The offenders were usually acquaintances or relatives of the victim (n=24); only two groups victimized a person unknown to them.

5.3.2 Characteristics of the juvenile female group sexual offenders

About a quarter of the juvenile females (23%) lived in a two-parent family, while 49% had divorced parents. For 10 juvenile females no information was found about their family background. An ambivalent or bad relationship with parents was reported by 34%. Six juvenile females (17%) mentioned that one or both parents were alcohol dependent and 14% said they had a delinquent father or brother. A third of the juvenile females reported they had a boyfriend, and 20% had a romantic partner who was their co-offender.

A little under one in three (29%) of the juvenile females functioned at borderline-intellectual level (IQ 71-84) or had mild mental retardation (IQ 50-70). The moral development of a third was judged as below average, about a third (33%) was described as (very) susceptible. Almost one in three (31%) was rated as having low self-esteem. Antisocial behavior prior to the sexual offense was reported for 37%. Based on the psychological and psychiatric reports, 11 juvenile females were diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (N=7) and/or showed signs of a personality disorder (N=8). The psychiatric disorders that were diagnosed were conduct disorder (N=5), oppositional defiant disorder (N=1) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (N=1). Four juvenile females were reported to have traits of a borderline personality disorder, one juvenile female was reported to have traits of an antisocial personality disorder and one was reported to have traits of a dependent personality disorder.

The majority of the juvenile females (54%) had reported abuse or neglect: emotional and/or pedagogical neglect (26%) and physical abuse (29%). Sexual abuse was reported by 31% of all juvenile females; the majority of these juvenile females had been victimized by a non-family member, for instance an acquaintance. A third of the juvenile females had exhibited risky sexual behavior like sexual intercourse before age 14 (21%) or sexual soliciting (13%). About a quarter had been bullied at school; 34% reported truancy. More than a third had had behavioral problems at school such as fighting, threatening other students, lying, stealing, or had conflicts with fellow students and/or teachers. About a quarter reported they had committed one or more offenses prior to the sexual offense, mainly theft, violent offenses, and vandalism.

Overall, for 63% of the juvenile females at least one problem was reported in the above mentioned domains (e.g. presence of disorders, experiences of abuse/neglect, sexual risk behavior and problems with authorities or anger management).

5.3.3 Victim and offense characteristics

There were 33 victims in total. The average age of the victim was 14 years (minimum = 7, maximum = 23) and the majority (88%) of the victims were female. Five groups committed multiple offenses against the same victim(s), or against other victims.

Mostly, differences between the age of the victim and the offenders were small. However, the three youngest victims (7, 9 and 9) were all abused by romantic couples consisting of a juvenile female and her adult male partner.

The offenses were mostly committed in the house of the offender (46%) or in public places like a wood, a park or a playground (46%). One group assaulted the victim in her own house (for one group the crime location was unknown).

The role of the female offenders in the offense varied. Some were active and participated in the sexual acts or battered or threatened the victim (58%), while others provoked other group members or created opportunities for other group members to commit the offense, for instance by introducing the victim to the offenders or by making no effort to stop the abuse. This shows that juvenile females charged for sexual offense are not a homogeneous group: almost half of them did not actually committed a hands-on sexual offense. Nevertheless, they are legally considered as hands-on sexual offenders, because their actions were seen as having the criminal intent of a hands-on sexual offense.

Nineteen groups (73%) used some kind of violence during their offense. Fourteen groups used physical violence (beating, kicking), three groups used verbal violence (threatening the victim if (s)he would not cooperate), four groups humiliated the victim (spitting, yelling and insulting) and one group destroyed personal items belonging to the victim. Four groups used a weapon during the offense to threaten the victim (gun) or to remove the clothes of the victim (knife).

5.3.4 Interaction between offenders, and between offenders and victims

Before the offense

In total 16 groups made preparations for the offense, in various manners. In eight groups the offenders spoke with each other (explicitly) about having sex. In one group the female offender asked her co-offender if he would like her to 'arrange' something for him with the victim, while in another group one of the male offenders told his sibling he wanted to have sex with the girl who was walking on the street. In other groups, offenders discussed with each other what kind of acts they were going to perform on the victim. Offenders also discussed where the offense could take place.

In 11 groups the offenders talked with the victim before the offense about sexual acts. Offenders said to the victim they wanted to have sex, asked what kind of sex the victim would like to have, in one case offenders told the victim to participate in the sex or otherwise the offender would sell her to a friend. One couple first asked the victim if she wanted to join them in having sex.

Three groups prepared themselves in a more practical way: one group bought rope so they could tie the victim, one couple doped the victim and her boyfriend so she could not resist and he could not disturb their threesome, and two groups let the female co-offender arrange for the female victim to be present. One group discussed in advance the way they were going to hit the victim and who was going to cut off the victim's hair.

All in all, it appears that in a majority of offender groups, some kind of preparation for the offense had been made. Mostly, plans or expressions of intent had been voiced. Instrumental preparations were much rarer, probably because the presence of co-offenders rendered additional support unnecessary. However, even though it was clear in most cases what was going to happen just before the offense was initiated, the offenses do not appear to have been planned long beforehand.

During the offense

In the majority of the groups (62%) the juvenile female offender(s) participated in the sexual acts or in the violence. They abused the victim themselves, they held the victim so he or she could be abused by co-offenders, or they physically abused or verbally threatened the victim. In 10 groups the juvenile females had no hands-on contact with the victim. For instance, they provoked the more active offenders to perform certain (sexual) acts, they introduced the victim to the other offenders while they knew that the victim was going to be abused or they did not intervene while victims were abused in their house.

In eight groups (30%) the victim was fondled, for example by touching the breasts of the victim or touching her genitals. In fourteen groups (54%) the victim was sexually penetrated, in two groups (8%), the victim was forced to perform oral sex, in two groups (8%) the victim was forced to undress or to show his penis to the offenders.

Only in five groups (19%) a distinct leader of the offense was present. Mostly, offenders collaborated without directives. Some offenders communicated with each other during the offense about practical things like getting the victim in the right position. Evidence that the offenders tried to stop each other during the offense did not emerge in any of the group cases. When there was genital penetration, none of the male offenders used a condom.

In four groups at least one of the offenders had used drugs or alcohol before committing the offense: In one group all offenders had used alcohol, in

another group the offenders had committed multiple sexual offenses during which they had sometimes used alcohol and/or marijuana, while in one case the male and female offender doped the victim with speed and alcohol before they sexually abused her. In one case only one juvenile male offender had probably used soft-drugs before committing the sexual offense.

Verbal resistance (saying they did not want this or trying to talk the offenders around to stop the abuse) was shown by 12% of the victims, 31% resisted physically (by running away from the offenders, extreme movements so the offenders could not penetrate or tearing loose from the offenders).

In conclusion, in the majority of the groups there was hands-on contact between offenders and (the) victim(s). Penetration occurred in a majority of cases. A minority of victims resisted verbally or physically. The female offenders had an active role in a majority of the offenses, even though not all performed sexual acts.

After the offense

In 50% of cases all offenders confessed to the offense. In 12% of the cases none of offenders confessed, and in the remainder some of the offenders confessed. In about a third of the groups (38%), offenders said they realized during the offense that the victim did not like the sexual acts. None of the offenders reported they had threatened the victim to prevent she/he would go to the police, and neither did offenders construct a scenario that could have been told to the police when they were questioned. Some of the offender groups (12%) brought the victim home after the offense while the majority of the offenders resumed their daily activities like going back to school or by having dinner at home.

Seven offenders reported they regretted what had happened; three of them were feeling sorry for the victim, four were feeling sorry for themselves and regretted the trouble they had to deal with now. Four offenders accused each other of initiating the offense.

Thus, it appears that in quite a number of cases offenders realized during the offense that they had gone too far. However, statements about the offenders' perception of the offense were primarily obtained from the offenders after they had been charged with the sexual offense. Thus, defense strategies or neutralization techniques may have influenced the statements. Few preparations were made to prevent prosecution. The offenses often seemed to have an almost casual nature: after the offense most offenders simply resumed what they were, there was little reliving of the offense.

5.3.5 Aims of the offender groups for initiating the offense

The primary aim for initiating the offense varied. Three qualitatively different categories or 'themes' emerged, which are illustrated below with examples.

Ten groups committed the offense because of what we label 'harassing the victim'. This was expressed by the offenders for example by stating that what happened was just to make fun. This aim can be illustrated with the following two examples:

A and B were hanging around at a snack bar. When they saw the victim (an intellectually disabled boy) approaching, the juvenile females started hissing sexually oriented remarks at him, told him to masturbate and A took the victim's hand and helped him. When he ran away they chased him, and forced him again to masturbate. At one point the victim pulled up his trousers and A started hitting him. B extinguished a burning cigarette on his upper leg. The victim started yelling and cursed at them, after which A kicked him in his genitals. A police-report mentioned that A had said that the victim sometimes masturbated in public and that it was stupid of her to beat someone up who was intellectually disabled. She was surprised herself with the sexual content of her aggressive behavior. She was known with criminal justice authorities for aggression regulation problems.

The victim, a woman of 21, was waiting for the subway when she was surrounded by a group of three juvenile females and a juvenile male. The juvenile females pushed her against an advertising column and touched the woman's face, breasts and genitals (over her clothes). The victim was asked if she was scared and one girl was performing some kind of lap-dance on the victim. During this the juvenile females were continuously laughing. The juvenile male was not participating in the touching and the victim heard him saying to the juvenile females that they should stop. After a couple of minutes the victim managed to push the juvenile females away and to get into the metro that was just arriving. A police report mentioned that the offenders said they committed the offense 'because it was fun'.

Second, ten groups committed the offense with a predominantly sexual aim. Nine of these groups consisted of couples, and six of these groups had female victims who were considerably younger than the male co-offender.

H, a 17-year-old juvenile female wanted to experience a threesome. Her boyfriend, K, knew this and together they picked up another couple in a pub, after doping them with alcohol and speed. When they were all at the couple's home, the female victim refused to have sex with H. K threatened to shoot the victim's boyfriend if she didn't have sex with H. At gun-point, the female victim had oral sex with H, while K was watching. H told the police it all was a little game and the victim should not be so fussy about it.

C and D, two juvenile males of 13 years old, were hanging around at a playground when they saw three juvenile females approaching. C was curious how far he could go with a girl, and suggested to D they should try to finger one of the juvenile females, and he asked one of them. She stated that she hesitated but ended on the lap of C. She had unbuttoned her trousers herself and the juvenile male embraced her. The second of the other juvenile females, F, told him to hurry and she grabbed his hand and pushed his hand into the panties of the victim. When one of their parents was walking into the direction of the playground, the victim managed to free herself. The victim told the police that C and F had threatened to beat her up if she would say something about what happened to her parents. C told the police that he just wanted to know how far he could go with a girl and that he didn't know the victim was only 10 years old. F reported that she had grabbed the hand of C not to prevent what had happened, but to be more supportive to the victim.

A third and last theme was found in five groups in which the initiation of the offense started with revenge. Three groups initiated the offense because they regarded the victim as sexually too obtrusive or because she had (had) an affair with a(n) (ex-)boyfriend of one of the offenders. One group assaulted the victim because she was gossiping about two of the offenders and one group assaulted the victim because they were annoyed by her theatrical and exaggerating behavior.

P, a 15- year-old juvenile female was together with one of her female peers, D, walking in the city. They spotted Z, an acquaintance, who was now having an affair with P's former boyfriend. P and D decided to teach Z a lesson and invited the girl for a drink. When they were walking through a park, they hit the girl and forced her to undress herself. P forced the girl, by yelling and shouting, to put sticks into her own vagina. As this was happening, three male peers were crossing the park and they saw the three juvenile females. P told the juvenile males it was okay to rape Z because she was a slut any way. One of the juvenile males raped Z and after this, they all left Z behind, bleeding heavily.

5.3.6 Reasons and explanations for participation in a group offense

For the majority (63%) of the juvenile females group dynamics played a dominant role. These adolescent females had expressed statements in which it was said that she wanted to belong to the group, could not resist joining in, felt pressurized, did not think about what would happen as everybody had joined in and thought it to be normal. Some of the juvenile females who committed the offense together with their male intimate partner, reported they were forced (physically and/or emotionally) to join in the abuse. These are some illustrative statements derived from police reports:

'I couldn't resist the pressure of the group and was afraid they would make fun of me if I would not join them'

'I did it because I was afraid of my co-offender, he could be very threatening if I did not agree with him'

'I wanted to belong to the group and therefore I joined them'

'I was dragged into everything by my co-offenders; I could not assess the consequences'

The remaining juvenile females (31%) co-offended mainly for instrumental reasons. In the court files, these adolescent females had made statements that made clear that having a co-offender had made the offense possible, easier, or more profitable. The following are a number of illustrations of this co-offending perspective:

A knew that the victim had sex with X, the boyfriend of A. Together with B she decided to take revenge on the victim. B was the brother of X and B felt rejected by the victim because she had

refused to have sex with him. A and B lured the victim into a wood, and while A was hitting the victim she was raped by B.

D thought that the victim was behaving sexually too obtrusive towards her boyfriend. She arranged a couple of friends to teach the victim a lesson. The victim was sexually harassed by the group.

5.4 Discussion

Not much is known about juvenile female group sexual offenders. This study analyzed data on all juvenile females adjudicated for a group sexual offense in the Netherlands in the period 1993-2008; as such, in a statistical sense, our sample constitutes a population. While the sample size may not be large in an absolute sense we have presented unique material about a subject that, as far as we know, has never been studied this extensively. We were able to collect rich data on offender background characteristics. Also, using offender and victim statements and information collected by the criminal justice authorities as laid down in the court files, we could reconstruct the offenses, and identify categories of aims for the offenses and motives for co-offending.

Overall, three findings stand out: juvenile females who commit a group sexual offense are characterized by (sexual) victimization experiences and other (interpersonal) problems, there is heterogeneity in the aims of the sexual offense, with three main themes emerging from the data; and there is heterogeneity in the reasons why they committed the offense in a group.

With regard to the first main finding, juvenile female group sexual offenders appear marked in terms of psychological disturbance and victimization. For 63% of the juvenile females, disorders, victimization experiences, risky sexual behavior and/or anger management /authority problems were reported in which they partly seem to differ from juvenile male group sexual offenders. For juvenile male group sexual offenders, many problems have been reported in the literature concerning family background and problems at school, but not many striking characteristics were reported or present concerning their personality and (sexual) victimization experiences. The prevalence of victimization of sexual abuse in this group of juvenile females stands out, though it is commonly assumed that females have an increased risk of sexual victimization when compared with males (Zahn et al., 2010), and that in particular juvenile female offenders have often been abused sexually (Wong et al., 2010). We were unable to find Dutch norm scores for psychological and psychiatric disorders, so we cannot gauge these findings.

The committed sexual acts were quite different when compared with group sexual offenses committed by juvenile males. Bijleveld et al (2007) reported that 95% of the all-male juvenile group sexual offender groups penetrated the victim. This was strikingly lower in this female group, at 53%. In that sense, the group sexual offenses committed by these females may appear less serious than those committed by males and one could regard female group sexual offenders therefore as a group of offenders with a different profile. However, the juvenile males reported on by Bijleveld et al. (2007) had undergone personality screening for their share in at least one group sexual offense, and in the Netherlands, personality screening is often requested when an offender had committed a serious offense or when the public prosecutor supposes that the offender committed the offense under the influence of disorders. The difference in severity of the sexual crimes may thus be due to the different manner in which the samples were construed.

Another difference that emerges is the fact that none of the female offenders reported they had threatened the victim to prevent she/he would go to the police, nor that they had constructed a scenario that could have been told to the police if/when they were questioned. This could imply that the offenders maybe had not expected that the victim would report the offense at the police or that the offenders had not thought about the possible consequences of their behavior. This assumption could be supported by the fact that when there was genital penetration, none of the male offenders had used a condom, which is quite low when compared with the 50% of male juvenile group sexual offenders who used a condom (Bijleveld, et al.,2007). However, the latter could also be due to offenders being confident no police reporting would ensue. It could also mean that offenders did not have any experience at all with planning and committing sexual offenses. Lastly, it could mean that offenders were not afraid of pregnancies because their victims were young.

We found three main aims for initiating the sexual offense, namely harassing the victim, sexual gratification, and taking revenge. The harassment aim was more prevalent here than among male group sexual offenders. However, this aim bears some similarity with that of juvenile males who tried to impress their male co-offenders to enhance their status in the group. Sexual gratification as an aim was present in this study, but less often than in juvenile male sexual offenders (Bijleveld et al, 2007; Alison & Porter, 2009). All groups with a sexual aim victimized younger female (child) victims, which is not common in juvenile male sexual offending groups. The third initiation aim, taking revenge, was also found in Kubik (2005), who examined juvenile female sexual solo-offenders. Apart from particularities found in sexual sadism (Marshall & Kennedy, 2003), taking revenge is not a commonly found aim in juvenile male group sexual offenders. In that respect therefore, female group sexual offending appears to differ. Gannon and Rose

(2008) reported a similar offending theme in adult female sexual offenders, and possibly this specific theme of taking revenge (by humiliation) is unique for female group sexual offenders. In that case, this raises the question whether these juvenile females should be seen as sexual offenders, or as offenders who commit a violent offense with the sexual element added for additional humiliation.

We distinguished two reasons (based on different perspectives on co-offending) for committing the sexual offense in a group: because of group dynamics and because of instrumental reasons. When examining these perspectives, we see that some juvenile females reported they were dragged into the abuse by their peers. Those who committed the offense together with their male intimate partner in fact often reported they were forced (physically and/or emotionally) to join the abuse. Especially the latter, being forced by a male co-offender to participate in the abuse, is often reported by adult female sexual offenders (Harris, 2010). The instrumental perspective that we identified may in fact go two ways: the female offender uses a male offender to humiliate the victim or to aid in carrying out the offense, or the male offender uses a female to get access to other females or to younger children. We believe that the first instrumental reason might even be subdivided, namely into juvenile females who are physically or practically not able to commit the offense, and juvenile females who need their co-offenders for mental support to perform their act.

All in all we see there are some striking differences between juvenile females and juvenile males who are involved in group sexual offending. This is striking because in almost all offender groups that we studied at least one male offender was involved, so one would expect that the differences between group sexual offenses committed by solely males and those committed by mixed groups (with in most cases one or two females present) need not be that large. The differences may however be explained by general characteristics of male and female friendships. As mentioned by Weerman and Hoeve (2012), male friendships are generally more characterized by hierarchy and competition, while female friendships tend to be more strongly characterized by intimacy, emotional involvement and confidentiality. Bijleveld et al (2007) found that male bonding and showing male competence is an important feature of male group sexual offending. Exposing male competence, like showing a condom containing sperm to the other offenders or showing sexual competence, is arguably not found in this sample because there might be no need or reward to show these male competencies to a (partly) female audience.

Some juvenile females seemed to have started the offense not for their own sexual gratification (which was a common aim within juvenile male group sexual offenders) but for sexual humiliation to punish the victim or to take revenge. This particular type of offending seems to be unique to female sexual offenders in

groups, yet it has not been reported yet, perhaps it does not fit with traditional male-based views of sexual offending. The high prevalence of female victims of this kind of sexual offending also has probably little relation with the sexual preferences of the female offenders. Instead, many of these juvenile females simply wanted to take revenge on someone who is a female, and being female themselves they might have picked the group-wise and public sexual humiliation to achieve their goal best. The victim was chosen because the offenders wanted to take revenge on specifically this victim, not because they wanted to get sexual gratification from having sex with any female. In juvenile male group sexual offending we see that offenders more often victimize a female victim, regardless of who this may be, because their main goal is to achieve sexual gratification. Interestingly, male juvenile group sexual offending also often included the element of humiliation, but here it is usually not applied to take revenge, but to experience power and show off to male accomplices (see Bijleveld et al., 2007). However, we want to note that our comparisons with findings from studies on juvenile male group sexual offenders may be influenced by method differences and further systematic comparisons would be needed to make better inferences about any differences.

One of the limitations of our study is the small sample size. This limitation is difficult to overcome as we studied all juvenile female sexual offenders known to the criminal justice authorities in the Netherlands since 1993. This small sample size implies that we could not meaningfully do statistical analyses of differences between subgroups, for example between the three categories with different aims for their sexual offense, or the female that actually committed the sexual acts themselves and the females that were merely accomplices or co-perpetrators.

Another limitation is that we were unable to statistically test the differences between juvenile male sexual offenders and juvenile female sexual offenders involved in group sexual offending so that definitive statements about distinctive features for juvenile female sexual offenders are not warranted. Thirdly, our sample consisted of juvenile female sexual offenders who were caught and prosecuted for their sexual offense, and it is likely that only the more severe offenses are reported to the judicial authorities. These convicted offenders are not necessarily representative of all young women who commit group sexual offenses as much offending is unreported. General reasons of victims for not reporting sexual victimization are blaming themselves for being raped/assaulted, fear of repeat victimization when the victim knows the offender, regarding the offense as minor, or a belief that reporting the crime would not make a difference (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). Furthermore, statements about victimization and the offenders' perception of the offense were primarily obtained from the offenders after they had been charged with the sexual offense. Thus, defense strategies or

neutralization techniques may have influenced the statements. It is also possible that the juvenile females were afraid or ashamed to report any sexual arousal while committing the offense. For that reason, it is likely we may have underestimated the extent to which juvenile females offended out of sexual motives. Similarly, the forensic psychologists who are assessing the offenders for psychological screening may not have registered these females' sexual feelings and motives because they have never been educated in their clinical training how to assess sexual abusing behavior shown by females, because they do not think of women as sexual offenders or because they think that sexual arousal is not the cause of female sexual offending behavior and can therefore be neglected during the assessment (Denov, 2004)

Implications for intervention and treatment must be linked to the aims for committing a sexual offense. However, all juvenile females committed their offense in a group, which implies that group dynamics may be taken into account. For example, for some of these offenders it could be risky to treat them in a group for their deviant behavior (Gifford-Smith et al., 2005). Treating troubled, serious offenders like these juvenile females in groups may even increase adolescent problem behavior and negative life outcomes in adulthood, because group members with the same background may reinforce each other's deviant behavior (Dishion et al., 1999). Clinicians should investigate whether juvenile female group sexual offenders are susceptible to peers in a usual, normal way (comparable to other adolescents), or whether they are highly susceptible as part of the offender's general personality traits. Further, it seems warranted to assess and treat offenders who acted as a leader during the offense different than offenders who have been mere followers.

Treatment should always be tailored to the individual needs of offenders. When we keep in mind that many of these females are marked in terms of trauma and that the prevalence of disorders appears elevated, interventions may need to address these issues first. It is to be doubted whether interventions should focus on sexual re-offending prevention similarly as in males, as the level of sexual recidivism in adult female sexual offenders is quite low - about 3% (6.5 years follow-up) (Cortoni, Hanson & Coache, 2010), and is low, 10%, in juvenile male group sexual offenders as well (10 years follow-up) (Hendriks & Bijleveld, 2005). We expect it is likely low in this group of juvenile female sexual offenders too.

When we focus on the three different aims we identified from the data (harassing the victim, sexual gratification, and taking revenge), different intervention goals appear. Firstly, juvenile females who committed the offense to harass a victim could benefit from interventions that focus on increasing cognitive and social skills with which self-control and (social) problem-solving skills can be improved and which encourages offenders to consider the consequences of their

behavior. Examples of suitable interventions are the Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program (Robinson & Porporino, 2003) or the Enhanced Thinkings Skills programme (Sadlier, 2010). Secondly, because the offenses committed because of sexual gratification appear mostly instigated by the sexual motivation of the male co-offenders, juvenile females within this group will probably not benefit from interventions that focus on the sexual content of their offense. For these women, interventions should likely focus on increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy, so that they can better deal with future (high-risk) situations and stand up against their intimate partners (Ford, 2010). Juvenile females who took revenge on their victim, the third motive, gain probably the most of social-cognitive interventions that focus on increasing their behavioral and problem-solving skills (Hipwell & Loeber, 2006). An example of a suitable intervention is the Aggression Replacement Training (Goldstein, Glick and Gibbs, 1998). While the focus of treatment may thus be primarily be such non-sexual issues, assessment and treatment should not overlook the sexual aspects of, and motivation for the crime.

In summary, this research shows that juvenile female group sexual offenders are an interesting category of offenders, in which several subgroups can be distinguished. In only part of the cases, the main aim was to get sexual gratification, often not for the female co-offenders but for someone else. In the majority of the cases, the main aim of the sexual offense seemed to be to harass the victim or to take revenge and humiliate the victim. The characteristics and group dynamics differ largely from those that were found previously among male juvenile group sex offenders. Another important observation to be made is that although female juvenile group sex offenders appear to be a very heterogeneous group, the majority of them are characterized by having (inter)personal problems and (sexual) abuse experiences.

In future research it would be interesting to study (sexual) re-offending of juvenile female group sexual offenders, because as far as we know, no studies have been conducted on this topic. Elaborating on the previous research suggestion, it would be useful to study the role of this particular group sexual offense in the criminal career of the juvenile females, and to examine whether it was an once-only act, or the start - or maybe the end - of a criminal career. To conclude, there is some controversy in the literature about whether 'duos' (in this study the romantic couples) should be considered as a group, and therefore included in the group dynamics research (da Silva et al., 2013). When we would be able to enlarge our sample, it would also be interesting to investigate what distinguishes such duos and larger groups.

Chapter 6 General discussion

6.1 Summary

The aim of this study was to describe the characteristics of female sexual offenders and their offending careers. This thesis is the first to provide a description and analysis of all known (the entire population in a statistical sense) adult and juvenile female sexual offenders in the Netherlands. The sample was obtained using data from the prosecutor general's office of the Netherlands from the beginning of the digitalizing of the prosecution registration system in 1993. For the samples of adult and juvenile offenders, individual criminal records were analyzed, containing all offenses since the age of 12. Court files were retrieved which contain detailed information about the sexual offenses from the criminal courts where the female sexual offenders had been prosecuted and/or convicted. Only hands-on offenses were included. Compared with international research, rich information for a relatively large group of female sexual offenders was collected.

In the first study the court files (N=111) of all adult female sexual offenders were studied to examine differences between solo-offenders and those offenders who had committed a sexual offense with one or more co-offenders (almost two thirds), and to investigate whether subtypes of female sexual offenders could be distinguished. The studied female sexual offenders appear heavily burdened in terms of family history (neglect, physical abuse and particularly sexual abuse) and psychosocial problems (violent partners, substance abuse, and prostitution). On average, they were judged as functioning at lower intellectual levels. The prevalence of mental disorders appears high with respect to norm scores. About 70% of the female sexual offenders had abused children.

Those who had offended with co-offenders had significantly more female and intra-familial victims, and had significant more often personality disorders than solo-offenders. Using homogeneity analysis, four 'prototypical' offender types were distinguished, that we labeled and described as follows: 'the young assaulter' and 'the rapist' are relatively young solo-offenders and abuse extra-familial victims. The other two prototypes, 'the psychologically disturbed woman' and 'the passive mother', are older women who co-offended in sexual abuse. These last two groups mostly abused their own children together with their male/intimate partner. These four 'prototypes' partly overlap with previous typologies. However, not present in the data was the 'teacher-lover type' reported on by others, a woman who abuses an adolescent but denies the abuse, and feels that she has a love affair with the victim. Some other previously found 'subtypes' were not identified in our data because they are mainly distinctive in criminal career aspects, which were not included in our analysis. While we were able to distinguish four 'prototypes' of female sexual offenders, it is not possible, because an explorative cluster analysis

was used, to assign female sexual offenders to certain prototypes based on their characteristics. Summing up, we conclude that adult female sexual offenders have varied backgrounds and commit sexual offenses in a variety of contexts, and that the prototypes in which these were clustered partly replicate those found in international research.

In the second study, all adult hands-on female sexual offenders (N=135) and their criminal career information as included in their criminal record was studied. The goal of this study was to investigate to what extent adult female sexual offenders specialize in sexual offending (committing only sexual offenses) and to what extent they can be characterized as generalists (committing other offenses next to sexual offenses). It was assumed that certain personal and offending characteristics would be associated with specialization and generalism.

Criminal careers were studied for on average 34 years, starting at age 12, which is the minimum age a person in the Netherlands can be prosecuted for a crime, and ending at the moment criminal record data were collected, on average at age 46. On average, adult female sexual offenders committed their sampling sexual offense when they were well into adulthood, at the age of 34. Sexual re-offending after the sampling offense (over a period of on average 10 years) was at 1.5% low, while more than a quarter of the women re-offended to other offenses like assault, drugs offenses, or theft.

Using latent class analysis a model with three classes was generated. One class consisted of women who had committed one sexual offense only. A relatively large number of women were classified as specialists, which means that the majority of them committed more than one sexual offense. Women who had co-offended with a male intimate partner were more often specialists. The third class consisted of generalists. They had all committed, besides the sexual offense, at least one serious offense such as manslaughter, serious assault or drugs offenses. In addition, many women in this class had also committed relatively minor offenses such as shoplifting, traffic offenses and fencing.

In the third study all hands-on juvenile female sexual offenders and their court files (N=66) were examined. Juvenile female sexual offenders were defined as juvenile females who were convicted for their sexual offense when they were between 12 and 18 years old. Juvenile female sexual offenders emerge as a group burdened with various problems, with 63% reporting problems in domains such as personal functioning, mental disorders, school and/or peers. About 37% of all juvenile females reported having been sexually abused. The prevalence of group sexual offending in this group of juvenile females (60%) appears high. Solo-offenders appeared more burdened in terms of trauma, and their offending also appeared less often as an once-only occurrence than for group offenders. Five subtypes were identified using content analysis of the crime descriptions: the

offense was committed because of group pressure, emotion regulation problems, for personal profit or gratification, as sexual experimentation or under the influence of a mental disorder. This study shows there is heterogeneity in the background and motives of juvenile female sexual offenders.

From this study it remained unclear what the function and role of the group was in these offenses. This was therefore the topic of the fourth study. In this fourth study, heterogeneity of juvenile female group sexual offenders was studied. The offenses, the aims of the group in committing the offense, and the motives of the juvenile female offenders for participating in the offense were studied. Qualitative analyses showed that a group could have three different aims for initiating the group sexual offense namely harassing the victim, sexual gratification, or taking revenge. The latter, taking revenge, was previously reported in studies on juvenile female sexual offenders and adult female sexual offenders. Two motives for committing a sexual offense in a group emerged: because of group dynamics and because of instrumental reasons. The first motive implies that group dynamics play a role, such as wanting to belong to the group or not being able to resist joining in the group behavior. Some of the juvenile females reported they felt forced by their romantic partner to join in the abuse, which is also regularly reported by adult female group sexual offenders. The instrumental motive implies that offenders choose each other to offend in a group because they are not or less well able to commit the offense alone. This may have however, two directions: the juvenile female offender uses a male offender to humiliate the victim, and in doing so the male co-offenders is selected by the female offender, or the male offender uses a female to get access to other females or to children.

6.2 Discussion

The most consistent findings and their theoretical implications are discussed in this section.

A first striking finding is that about 60% per cent of the female sexual offenders, adults as well as juveniles, had a (male) co-offender. Co-offending therefore appears to be a consistent characteristic of female sexual offending. That being said, the analyses suggested that aims and motives may be different for juvenile and adult female sexual offenders. Adult female group sexual offenders regularly reported that during the offense a (high) level of mental and/or physical coercion was exercised by their male co-offender. Women reported they were physically threatened and abused by their male co-offender. Similar findings were reported by Jones (2008) who interviewed 50 sentenced women (non-sexual offenders) about their (criminal) involvement with their co-offenders.

Juvenile female sexual offenders on the other hand often reported they had chosen their co-offenders themselves because they needed them to complete

the offense (the juvenile female was by herself physically not able to control the victim, or to complete the offense without any co-offenders). Sometimes the juvenile females mentioned they were dragged into the offense by their peers, but mostly they still emphasized their own culpability and responsibility within the offense instead of passing the responsibility to their co-offenders.

It appears therefore, while co-offending is high both in adult as well as in juvenile female sexual offenders, that the dynamics within juvenile group sexual offenses are different than the dynamics within the adult groups. The majority of the adult female sexual offenders committed their offense together with their romantic partner, while the juvenile female sexual offenders committed the offense mostly in the presence of more than one offender with whom they were not in a romantic relationship. In general, it is assumed that group dynamics differ between so-called 'duo's' (groups with two members) and so-called '2+' groups (groups with more than two members) (Da Silva et al, 2013), and it is likely that the group dynamics would also differ between offenders who are in a romantic relationship, and between offenders who are family members, or friends. It may be more difficult to resist the group pressure of four persons, than the group pressure of one person, and it easier to ignore an acquaintance who wants to commit an offense than a romantic partner with whom one is living in the same house.

One of the major and general problems in explaining co-offending, regardless of the kind of data, is that it is often not clear what happened during the offense. Especially during offenses when many offenders are involved, or when offenses are committed over a range of time, it is not easy to reconstruct what happened exactly and what each offender did during the offense. Also, in such co-offending cases, offenders may attempt to minimize their responsibility for the offense while claiming the other offenders are the instigators. There were more indications for such 'shovelling off' in the adult female sexual offending cases than in those of juvenile female sexual offenders: as we saw above, adult female sexual offenders more often claimed that they in some way were forced to participate in the abuse than juvenile female offenders. One reason for the adult female offenders to moderate their share in the offense may be that they have more at stake, such as losing custody of their children, losing their job and social ostracism when their social network finds out they have been convicted for sexual abuse. Adult female sexual offenders may therefore have more incentives to minimize their share in the offense than juvenile female sexual offenders, for whom stakes may be less prominent or less high. It may also be more difficult to deny one's share in an offense when there are five co-offenders who may testify differently instead of just one romantic partner, and harder when the victim is not a young child.

The second finding concerns motives of female sexual offenders. Juvenile female sexual offenders' motives were studied in chapters four and five. The analyses showed that juvenile females had a broad spectrum of offending motives, like emotional deregulation and group pressure. Sexual drive or sexual gratification was seldom the major drive for committing the abuse. While chapters two and three did not have the explicit goal of examining motives of adult female sexual offenders, from the analyses the following can be deduced. A number of adult female sexual offenders had stated that they committed their offense because of sexual experimentation in babysitting-situations, or had victimized an adult woman to take revenge. The other two distinguished groups victimized their own children; one group performed hands-on sexual acts on the victim, and for these women sexual motives may have played a role. The other group of women was often not present while the abuse occurred even though they knew it was occurring. For adult sexual offenders, sexual motives appear therefore not to be a prominent aim or motive either. It seems, all in all, that (adult and juvenile) female sexual offenders are more often motivated by non-sexual needs like power and/or control or are motivated by non-sexual needs such as fear for their co-offender(s).

The third consistent finding is the absence of paraphilic disorders. In our studies three women (2%) were officially diagnosed with a paraphilia: two women with pedophilia non-exclusive type and one woman with paraphilia NOS. For one juvenile female sexual offender there were suspicions of a paraphilia. These low rates are striking considering the large percentage of child victims (>70%) sexually abused by adult offenders, and the assumed connection between pedophilia and child sexual abuse. This means that it is not necessary for female sexual offenders to have a pedophilic interest to commit a sexual offense against a child, and that female sexual offenders have other motives not inspired by pedophilic preferences. It could however also be the case that their male co-offender has pedophilic preferences and that female offenders therefore end up as a co-offender against children. Thirdly, it could be so that it is difficult to recognize pedophilic preferences in women, or that women are not able, or unwilling, to recognize pedophilic interests in themselves and are therefore not able to report this to a clinician. According to the DSM-IV (TR) paraphilias are, except from sexual masochism, almost never diagnosed in women. However, it is assumed that this reflects more the inability of professionals to register these issues in women (Saradjian, 2010). Deviant sexual fantasies and sexual arousal have been observed in some female sexual offenders but the majority of these clinical studies were based on small numbers (< 20 offenders) so caution in generalizing these results is warranted (Rousseau & Cortoni, 2010). Also, it is unclear whether the nature of paraphilic preferences among females is the same as that of males. Seto (2008) has suggested that up to half of the child molesters are not pedophiles and according

to some Dutch studies- a minority of male child molesters commits their offense out of paraphilic preferences. Chivers, Rieger, Latty and Bailey (2004) showed that while men's physiological sexual arousal actually reflects their sexual preferences, women's arousal patterns are much more diversified and tend not to reflect their sexual preference. This suggests that sexual arousal patterns of men and women are different, and that more research is needed before we can infer the absence or presence of deviant sexual interests in female sexual offenders, or even incorporate this topic in treatment (Rousseau & Cortoni, 2010).

The fourth finding is that adult female sexual offenders exhibit a late onset (in their thirties) of their criminal career and that sexual re-offending is almost always absent. The majority of the offenders were classified as specialistic offenders who had mostly committed a series of sexual offenses with their romantic partner.

This late onset is firstly contradictory with one of the widely accepted theoretical tenets in criminology that crime peaks in early adolescence and declines in adulthood, the so-called age-crime curve (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The majority of the studies in life-course criminology analyzing this age-crime curve and (the development of) criminal careers focus on cohorts of offenders who have been followed from childhood until early adulthood (Piquero, 2008) and studies that follow offenders well into adulthood are scarce, even more so when it comes to the criminal career development of female offenders or adult sexual offenders. Although no trajectory analyses were conducted on the current group of female sexual offenders within this thesis, it seems justified to label these women as late-starters (Lussier et al, 2010), since the average age at which they started offending was 33. Theoretical explanations for adult-onset offending are still mainly absent, as this group of offenders has come to the attention of researchers only recently. Some scholars suggest that the start of offending of adult onset women is due to escalating lifestyle problems and a consequent exposure to negative social settings, such as domestic violence and unemployment rather than that they have a high crime propensity (Andersson & Torstensson Levander, 2013). Some suggest that these women's social backgrounds during childhood and emerging adulthood may have provided sufficient social control to keep them out of crime, or that they differ from chronic offenders by not having externalizing personality traits (Andersson & Torstensson Levander, 2013). As co-offending is so prevalent in female sexual offending, another explanation may be that the co-offender was the trigger for the sexual abuse, and perhaps even the instigator for the criminal career of the female offender.

The criminal career characteristics of the adult female sexual offenders were analyzed by using their official criminal record, self-reported offenses were not included. Thus it may be the case that these women are in fact not true adult-onset offenders, but, for instance, low-rate offenders. Anderson and Levander

(2013) stated that female adult-onset offenders resemble high-chronic offenders in their characteristics. Perhaps these women simply did not come into contact with the criminal justice system and were not prosecuted for offenses they had committed (DeLisi, 2006). As we saw in the introduction, for many it is hard to believe that women are able to commit sexual offenses. It may therefore be possible that their sexual offending never came to the attention of criminal justice authorities, or their cases were not prosecuted. If that is the case, then our methodology was inadequate to detect their early offending. Secondly, in this study during a follow-up period of 11 years only two women re-offended to a sexual offense and one woman had been convicted for a sexual offense prior to the index sexual offense. Since sexual offending in these women's adolescence is absent, and their age of onset for offending is in their thirties it is possible to conclude that juvenile sexual offending is no precondition for adult female sexual offending. It is possible that juvenile and adult female sexual offenders are in fact distinct groups that may need to be studied separately, and for whom separate explanatory models need to be developed. This has previously been concluded for adult and juvenile male sexual offenders (Lussier & Blokland, 2013; Lussier, Van Den Berg, Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2012).

6.3 Limitations and strengths of the studies in this thesis

Limitations

With data on 135 adult female sexual offenders and 66 juvenile female sexual offenders we studied an in an absolute sense a small sample. This limited us in the types of analysis we could conduct. There were just enough adult offenders to conduct the cluster analysis in chapter two, employing the rule of thumb criterion that there should be at least ten times as many respondents as variables. There was not enough data on juvenile female sexual offenders to conduct a comparable analysis since there were only 66 juvenile females and conducting a cluster analysis with only six variables would be a fairly narrow base.

This study is based on cases that had been registered with the criminal justice authorities. The cases that are reported to law enforcement are likely to be the more serious, overt cases. These sexual offenses may be characterized by relatively more violence directed against the victim (Travin et al., 1990). When other forms of abuse by women are not identified as abusive and reported, they do not reach the legal system. As mentioned in chapter 1, the dark number in female sexual offending is possibly even higher than in male sexual offending, and this is probably reflected in our data. We could only analyze those cases in which the sexual abuse was reported to the police, registered and where the case proceeded to be prosecuted.

Only hands-on offenses are discussed in this thesis. However, a number of women in our sample who were convicted for a hands-on sexual offense, never had physical contact with their victim(s). These are mostly cases where a mother knew about the abuse of her child(ren), but did not intervene and thus allowed the abuse to take place. If the woman herself did not touch the victim or commit any sexual acts, she can still be held to have had criminal intent on the crime, and therefore held culpable as an accomplice or co-perpetrator. We chose to include these cases for two reasons: firstly because legally speaking these women still count as offenders (and appear as such in the statistics), and secondly because in other studies a similar approach has been used. However, in a behavioral sense, these women cannot be considered hands-on offenders. This also emerges in chapter 2. The results of the cluster-analysis showed that the group of co-offenders is quite mixed and consists of offenders who actively co-perpetrated the offense as well as offenders who were absent in the actual offense but did not intervene while they knew the abuse was occurring. Our approach also leads to incongruity with victim studies: if a victim has been sexually abused, he or she will probably only report the offender who physically committed the abuse, and not the offender who knew of the abuse but who was not present during the abuse.

The data in the court files are retrospective, which means that statements by offenders are recorded after they have committed the offense. This challenges the validity of their statements. Offenders may neutralize and minimize their criminal behaviour. It is also possible that the psychopathology as included in the validated reports is exaggerated by the female offenders as a possible cry for help, or as a way to explain or excuse their offending behaviour and elicit sympathy from the clinician (Miller, Turner, & Henderson, 2009). It is also possible that any psychopathology is outcome rather than precursor of the offense and the following judicial process: it is at times unclear if an offender was already depressed before the offense was reported to the authorities, or whether she became depressed as a result of being in prison and not being able to see her partner and her children and being unclear as to what the future will bring.

There was such a lack of knowledge on the topic of female sexual offending that we decided to first describe the characteristics of female sexual offenders and their offending by using criminal justice data. We chose not to conduct interviews with the offenders in our sample: it is possible that interviews could have provided us with more and especially in-depth information about the offense process, the group dynamics, the way the women got involved in it and the way the women see their role in the offense. It would have been interesting to attempt to detect psychological mechanisms, such as cognitive distortions, that may underlie the offending behavior of female sexual offenders.

Though it was not within the scope of the project and therefore not a research question of this thesis, it would also have been insightful if we had been able to conduct systematic comparisons between female sexual offenders and other groups such as female non-sexual offenders or male sexual offenders. It is difficult to interpret certain findings and to conclude whether certain outcomes such as experiences of victimization and the high level of co-offending are typical for female sexual offenders or whether certain characteristics are found in female offenders in general, or in comparable samples of male sexual offenders. Only when certain findings are a unique feature of female sexual offenders and not a feature of (violent) female offenders in general, is it possible to understand the onset of, and the mechanisms behind their sexual offending.

As with all recidivism studies, our re-offending rate based on official data is the lower limit of true re-offending. A small proportion of sexual offending is reported to the police, and not all suspects will be prosecuted and convicted. As discussed in the introduction, certain factors probably have a unique influence on the dark number for female sexual offending: victims who are ashamed of what had happened to them, police officers who are reluctant to believe victims. The same goes for our data on these women's previous criminal career.

Strengths

In this thesis it was possible to overcome almost all of the important limitations of previous research that were discussed in the general introduction. Our sample comprised all women known by the criminal justice system to have committed a hands-on sexual offense, and is therefore possibly the most representative sample that can be compiled. We excluded suspects and hands-off offenders and included all offenders regardless of the age of their victim. We separately analysed adult female sexual offenders and juvenile female sexual offenders. These turned out to be two distinct groups with distinct characteristics and likely different motives for committing sexual offenses. By studying them separately we were able to show that for adult female sexual offending it is not necessary for sexual offenses to have been committed in childhood and adolescence. It is as yet unknown whether the reverse is true. The juvenile female sexual offenders we studied most probably will not be convicted in their thirties for sexual abuse. This however needs to be studied by following up their criminal career into adulthood.

Including all offenders regardless of the age of their victim(s) showed that whilst the majority of the adult female sexual offenders victimized child victims some of them also victimized peers. However, the majority of the juvenile female sexual offenders victimized primarily peers. If we had studied solely offenders with child victims we would have missed a significant number of offenders, and would have created an atypical image of 'the female sexual offender'.

Compared with other studies conducted on female sexual offenders, we have a fairly large sample. By studying offenders' entire criminal records, and combining these with data from court files on the hands-on sexual offenses they have committed and were convicted for by a criminal court, it was possible to create a sizeable and rich dataset on female sexual offenders. Combining these two sources is quite rare within the field of female sexual offenders.

6.4 Practical implications

In this section, in no particular order of importance, the implications for authorities that deal with female sexual offenders such as criminal justice authorities, treatment providers and clinicians, are discussed.

Criminal justice authorities and child welfare organizations

As mentioned in the introduction, police and mental health professionals are reported to have scripts of sexual offending: men are perpetrators and women are victims. Denov (2004b) reported that police officers reacted with disbelief to allegations involving women, while minimizing the seriousness of the reports and viewing the female suspects as less dangerous and harmful than male sexual offenders. When investigators fail to recognize female sexual offenders or trivialize the offenses, female perpetrators may escape prosecution and treatment. It is assumed that sexual offenses come to the attention of the legal system more often when a male perpetrator is involved. The sexual acts as committed by the women are assumed to be less serious and to consist of fondling (Faller, 1995). Cases may therefore only be pursued against the male offender due to the perception that he was primarily responsible. Our analyses point to the need to intervene with regard to the female offender as well. Our data suggest that a sizeable proportion of female sexual offenders may have been 'selected' by their male co-perpetrator for their gullibility and the fact that they had 'available' children. Dealing only with the male perpetrator is no safeguard that history would not repeat itself - with a new partner.

Police officers need therefore to perceive male and female suspects, but also male and female victims, in the same way. They need to realize that it is possible for men to be sexually victimized by a woman, and that it is possible for a woman to sexually harm someone. If the sexual abuse was the result of a certain degree of male coercion rather than female deviance, the woman should initially partial be held accountable for her actions (Becker, Hall, & Stinson, 2001). This different way of thinking can be achieved by education and improving knowledge on female sexual offenders.

Peter (2009) questions how well professional organizations are addressing female perpetrated sexual abuse. She found that most referrals for male-

perpetrated sexual abuse came from professional services, such as child welfare organizations, and that nearly two thirds of female-perpetrated violence came from nonprofessional services. This questions how well child welfare organizations are actively addressing female-perpetrated sexual abuse, and questions also to what extent child welfare workers are sufficiently aware of female-perpetrated sexual abuse.

Assessment and treatment needs

Gender-specific assessment and treatment programs are likely needed because female sexual offenders have, as this thesis showed, a particular etiology and offending behavior and consequently, they may have different treatment needs as compared with male sexual offenders (Blanchette & Taylor, 2010).

As far as is known there are no assessment and treatment programs especially designed for female sexual offenders in the Netherlands (Korfage & De Hoop, 2006) . In other countries they also appear scarce: gender-specific assessment and treatment programs are reported only by agencies in Canada, England and three American states (Texas, Colorado and New York).

This thesis has shown that there is heterogeneity in female sexual offenders. This heterogeneity is not only theoretically interesting but also relevant for clinical practice. The background of female sexual offenders, their type of sexual offense, the kind of victim and the setting in which the offense took place vary widely. Treatment should therefore be tailored. A substantial proportion of adult and juvenile female sex offenders are traumatized. Therefore treatment of these traumas and mental disorders is probably the best starting point, as in general dealing with traumas and mental disorders is necessary before starting with treatment that focuses on the sexual offense. Issues of suggestibility appear particularly warranted for the co-offenders who explicitly mentioned they were coerced to the offense. However, victimization experiences and influences by co-offending should not be over-emphasized within treatment as this could increase cognitive distortions and decrease taking responsibility for the offending behavior (Denov & Cortoni, 2006).

It is doubted whether treatment should focus on sexual re-offending prevention as is the case for males, because as we saw in the second study the level of sexual recidivism in female sexual offenders is very low - about 2%. In order to calculate the risk of an offender re-offending, evaluators consider individual characteristics of the offender which increase or decrease the probability of re-offending. A meta-analysis on male sexual offenders showed that deviant sexual preferences and antisocial orientation were the major predictors of sexual recidivism. Antisocial orientation was the major predictor of violent recidivism and

general recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). However, risk assessment tools developed for male sexual offenders are not necessarily valid for female sexual offenders. This is for two reasons: first, sexual reoffending in female offenders is much lower than in male offenders (Cortoni, Hanson, & Coache, 2010), and second, the risk factors included in the scales for men may not be valid for women. It seems that static risk factors for general re-offending are to a certain degree the same in male and female sexual offenders (prior criminal history, younger age, history of substance abuse), but static and dynamic risk factors related to sexual reoffending in females remain unknown (Cortoni & Sandler, 2013). Because of very low sexual reoffending whether it is practically possible to develop a risk assessment tool for female sexual offenders is questionable (Wijkman & Bijleveld, 2013). Because violent and especially general reoffending is more of an issue in female sexual offenders it may be better to screen female sexual offenders with a more general assessment tool which targets general and violent reoffending.

6.5 Agenda for future research

Expanding data collection

As mentioned in the limitations section, the number of offenders studied in this thesis is small. However, it is not possible to enlarge the Dutch sample because we have already collected data on the whole population of known adult and juvenile female sexual offenders. To increase power in statistical analyses, using data from other countries appears to be the only recourse. By adding comparable data from other countries, it would be possible to increase the sample size. This is especially necessary for investigating the risk and protective factors for sexual reoffending. For extracting factors influencing re-offending risk it is essential to have a fairly large group of offenders who re-offend, as otherwise it is not possible to distinguish key risk factors for re-offending, and key protective factors for not re-offending.

Theoretical development – pathways to offending

The main aim of this study was to describe characteristics of and heterogeneity in hands-on female sexual offenders, their offenses and their criminal careers. This was the first step into the relatively unknown territory of female sexual offender research. The aim of this thesis was not to develop a theoretical model with which it would be possible to explain the onset and development of female sexual offending behavior. This would however be an obvious and important follow-up research theme.

As far as known only Gannon et al (2008) have developed a model outlining the offense process of female sexual offenders, called the Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending. This model explains the offense process and its parts, such as the planning process and particular offending styles. Incarcerated female sexual offenders in the United Kingdom (N=22) were interviewed and a model from the narrative experiences of these women drawn to build the model. The model distinguishes three phases, background factors, the pre-offense period and the offense period. It pays a lot of attention to how the offense occurs and what factors influence this process.

In a follow-up study, Gannon et al (2010) identified three distinct and stable pathways to female sexual offending, based on interviews with 18 female sexual offenders originating from the 2008-study. The majority of the offenders followed an 'explicit approach', which means they intended to offend, and explicitly planned their offense. Another pathway was 'directed avoidant': these offenders intended not to offend, but did so under the direction and coercion of a male accomplice. The third pathway was followed by offenders who were 'implicitly disorganized'. They did not intend to offend, but offended impulsively following severe self-regulatory failure. These three pathways were also identified in a North-American replication study, in which no new pathways were identified (Gannon, Waugh, Taylor, Blanchette, O'Connor, Blake, & Ó Ciardha (2014). Limitations of this pathways study were that all offenders had received a prison sentence, implying that their offenses were fairly serious. Furthermore, the offenders victimized mostly children, so there is little information about women who offended against adolescents, peers or adults. One of the limitations of using interviews as main data source is that respondents may be susceptible to memory distortions and impression management strategies. To overcome these limitations the pathways study needs to be replicated using a larger sample (including adult and peer victims and using data based on police reports and other statements which are taken immediately following the offense). The study by Gannon et al. (2008, 2010) should be replicated in the Netherlands, as well as other countries, to learn more about the planning of female sexual offending.

Furthermore, a considerable number of the female offenders have been (sexually) victimized in childhood and adolescence. The impact of these experiences on their offending behavior should be studied. It is generally accepted that most children who are (sexually) victimized do not become offenders (Salter et al., 2003), and this thesis has shown that not all sexual offenders have been (sexually) victimized. It needs to be studied which factors, together with the sexual abuse experiences, contribute to the onset of sexual offending behavior in female sexual offenders. Future studies focusing on all these aspects would increase our understanding of the etiology of female sexual offending, and the possible role of experiences of victimization and cognitive distortions on their offending process.

Group dynamics

This thesis has shown that the majority of the (juvenile) female sexual offenders commit their offenses in a group, and that they often choose their co-offenders or are chosen by their co-offender. However, controversy exists about whether 'duos', such as romantic couples, should be considered as a group, and therefore included in the group dynamics research (da Silva et al., 2013). It would be relevant to investigate whether there are differences between solo-offenders, duos and two+ groups. A study on multiple perpetrator rape conducted by da Silva et al. (2013) showed that groups of 2+ offenders were significantly younger than duos, who were in turn significant younger than solo offenders. The authors also found significant differences in offender ethnicity, sexual acts performed, and duration of the sexual acts.

Future studies should also focus in more qualitative detail on the role of the co-offender in the sexual offending of adult women, since much of these women's (sexual) offending appears directly tied in with that of their (romantic) partners. In contrast with their juvenile counterparts, adult female sexual offenders appear often to have been chosen or selected by their co-offender(s). The model developed by Gannon et al. (2008) contained solo-offenders as well as co-offenders. However, their study did not pay much attention to the role of the co-offender other than questions about the coercion by the male partners (which may explain why much fewer women than expected on the basis of our Dutch findings were classified as 'directed avoidant'). Questions about the intensity and nature of any coercion and about the moment that coercion started should be included, as well as questions on current domestic violence and previous violent partners.

Criminal careers of (juvenile) female sexual offenders

In this thesis we have not attempted to predict sexual re-offending. As far as we know, two studies have empirically analyzed predictors of sexual reoffending in female sexual offenders. Williams and Nicholaichuk (2001) stated that the only

factor that clearly differentiated the two sexual recidivists in their study from the other women (total sample size was 62) was that they were the only two offenders who had engaged exclusively in solo offending. Sandler and Freeman (2009) found that with regard to criminal history variables, those offenders who had a sexual re-arrest (N=32) were more likely than those with no sexual re-arrest to have had at least one prior misdemeanor conviction, at least one prior felony conviction, and at least one prior drug conviction (N=1,434). More studies on predictors of (sexual) re-offending seem warranted.

As far we are aware no studies have been conducted on re-offending patterns of juvenile female sexual offenders. It would be useful to study the role of the sexual offense in their criminal career and to examine whether this was a once-only act, or the start - or maybe the end - of a criminal career. Lussier and Blokland (2013) concluded that the majority of male juvenile sexual offenders desisted from sexual offending, but that as the frequency of general nonsexual offending increased during adolescence, so did the risk of becoming an adult sexual offender. By increasing the sample size for juvenile female sexual offenders as well, it may become possible to identify predictors for general, violent and sexual re-offending, as well as protective factors against re-offending.

Systematic comparisons with other offender groups

One of the limitations of this thesis is that it was not able to make a systematic comparison with other offender groups, such as female violent offenders and female general offenders (or even female non-offenders), or with male sexual offenders. Therefore it is unclear whether certain characteristics are typical for female sexual offenders or whether they are a feature of female offenders in general, and whether characteristics are typical for sexual offenders in general, or for female sexual offenders in particular. Such systematic comparisons could be carried out by selecting groups of offenders using a similar protocol as that used for this study.

What happens after the conviction?

It is unclear what happens to the families of the adult female sexual offenders who abused their children, and with their relationships. What happens to their children when both parents are convicted? Do female sexual offenders, for example, stay with their romantic partner after the conviction? Do couples receive the same sentences, and what factors influence this sentencing? Scholars have suggested that female sexual offenders tend to receive less severe sentences than male sexual offenders (Saradijan, 2010). Sandler and Freeman (2010) found that being a female sexual offender rather than a male sexual offender significantly increased the odds of receiving less restrictive sentences such as a fine or an (un) conditional release

instead of incarceration. For studying this in the Netherlands, it is advisable to use a group of male sexual offenders who have been selected the same way as the female sexual offenders.

The follow-up period for studying criminal career characteristics in this study was quite long, more than 11 years. If, even over such a long period, sexual reoffending is so low, it is unlikely that the reoffending rates will increase if longer periods are employed. However, future research should examine this.

As illustrated with the quotes at the start of this thesis, police officers tend to minimize the seriousness of the sexual abuse as committed by female offenders and view female suspects as less dangerous and harmful than male sexual offenders. When the results of this thesis seem to suggest that female sexual offenders may indeed be less harmful than male sexual offenders: in many cases it is questionable whether these women would have committed their offenses without a male co-offender. However, it is precisely this seeming innocence what may make these offenders, in the presence of their co-offenders, even more harmful than the typical male sexual offender who abuses his children. When solely a man abuses his children, there may be ways for the victims to escape the sexual abuse, as they can report the sexual abuse to their mother. However, when the mother is also involved in the sexual abuse it becomes almost impossible for the victims to escape the cycle of abuse.

This thesis has shown that the motives of female sexual offenders for committing their offense are often not sexual, and, because a sizeable proportion of the offenders are victims of (sexual) abuse themselves, it might be tempting to label these women not as sexual offenders, but predominantly as victims. As we saw in the introduction there is, especially in feminist criminology, a certain unwillingness to acknowledge that women's acts of violence are not always a product of previous victimization experiences (Kruttschnitt & Carbone-Lopez, 2006). In this context it has also been said that traditional societies have the need to abnormalize violence in women, because seeing female violence as something normal would threaten our traditional scripts about women and their respective gender roles (Gilbert, 2002). However, in doing this we deny the possibility that women involved in violent crimes act as active, rational human subjects (Kruttschnitt & Carbone-Lopez, 2006), for which they can be held accountable.

All in all we should be careful with our tendency to minimize the role of women in sexual offenses, and we should not be tempted to see female sexual offenders solely as weak, victimized persons who cannot be held (fully) responsible for their acts. This thesis has shown that female sexual offenders exist: some women sometimes commit sexual offenses. These sexual offenses are often committed in the presence of a co-offender, and the role of this co-offender

probably differs between adult female sexual offenders and juvenile female sexual offenders. Women's motives for committing a sexual offense vary, but appear generally not to be sexually motivated. It seems that many offenses are influenced by contextual factors such as peer-pressure, but more in-depth research is needed before we can make definitive statements about the onset and development of women's sexual offending behavior.

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Samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Het plegen van zedendelicten wordt over het algemeen beschouwd als iets dat alleen door mannen wordt gedaan: "een vrouw doet zoiets toch niet". Onderzoek naar zedendelinquentie richt zich dan ook meestal op mannen; als er vrouwen in de steekproef aanwezig zijn dan worden deze meestal verwijderd bij het verrichten van analyses. Echter, uit slachtoffer- en daderstudies blijkt dat vrouwelijke zedendelinquentie niet zo zeldzaam is als soms wordt gedacht.

In dit proefschrift is onderzoek gedaan naar de kenmerken van vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten (zowel volwassen als jeugdige daders), hun delicten en - voor de volwassen daders - de ontwikkeling van hun criminele carrière. Het onderzoek is verricht op basis van de strafdossiers en justitiële documentatie (strafbladen), waarbij de gegevens zijn gebruikt van alle vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten die in de periode 1994-2008 zijn ingeschreven bij het openbaar ministerie voor een hands-on zedendelict (dit zijn delicten waarbij er volgens de juridische definitie fysiek contact is geweest tussen dader en slachtoffer). Dit betreft 135 volwassen vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten en 66 jeugdige vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten.

Uit de eerste studie naar volwassen vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten (hoofdstuk twee) kwam naar voren dat deze vrouwen relatief vaak slachtoffer zijn geweest van verwaarlozing, mishandeling en seksueel misbruik in hun kindertijd. Later in hun leven krijgen ze ook vaak te maken met gewelddadige partners, middelenmisbruik en zijn ze nogal eens werkzaam in de prostitutie. Over het algemeen functioneren de vrouwen op een intellectueel laag gemiddeld niveau en lijkt de prevalentie van psychiatrische stoornissen verhoogd. De meerderheid van de vrouwen (70%) maakt een slachtoffer dat jonger is dan 16 jaar. Bijna twee derde van de vrouwen pleegt het delict met iemand samen. De vrouwen met een medepleger maken vaker vrouwelijke en intra-familiale slachtoffers, en hebben vaker persoonlijkheidsstoornissen vergeleken met solodaders. Uit cluster analyse kwam naar voren dat er vier prototypen vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten te onderscheiden zijn die vooral verschillen in het wel of niet hebben van een mededader en de aard van de delicten die worden gepleegd. Het eerste prototype is een jonge volwassen vrouw die het delict zelfstandig heeft gepleegd, vaak tijdens oppas-situaties. Het slachtoffer is een mannelijk familielid en de dader maakt gebruik van fysiek geweld tijdens het delict. De seksuele handelingen liggen in de sfeer van betasting en/of orale seks. Trauma's in de kindertijd en psychiatrische stoornissen zijn afwezig. Het tweede prototype is een vrouw die ook zelfstandig het delict heeft gepleegd, maar waarbij de seksuele handelingen bestaan uit gemeenschap en binnendringen. Er is vaak sprake van oudere slachtoffers, geen familielid, waarbij de dader geen uitgesproken voorkeur heeft voor een mannelijk of vrouwelijk slachtoffer. De vrouwen van het derde en vierde

prototype hebben het delict met iemand samen gepleegd die vaak hun partner of echtgenoot is. Deze derde groep vrouwen wordt primair gekenmerkt door de aanwezigheid van psychische en/of psychiatrische stoornissen en een deel van de vrouwen in deze groep is seksueel misbruikt. Dit prototype vrouw is gemiddeld 30-35 jaar oud en de relatie met het slachtoffer is wisselend. Het kan een eigen kind zijn, maar ook een jong familielid. De seksuele handelingen wisselen en er is geen uitgesproken voorkeur voor een mannelijk of vrouwelijk slachtoffer. Het vierde prototype vrouwelijke zedendader is over het algemeen ouder (>41 jaar). De vrouwen kijken toe bij het misbruiken van het kind of verschaffen gelegenheid tot het misbruik; ze spelen zelf dus geen actieve rol bij het misbruik. Het misbruik betreft hun eigen kinderen of stiefkinderen die tamelijk jong zijn (7-11 jaar).

In hoofdstuk drie is gekeken naar de criminele carrière van de volwassen vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten. De leeftijd waarop de vrouwen hun eerste delict plegen was 34 jaar. Seksuele recidive was laag (1,5%). Uit latente klasse analyse, op basis van criminele carrière-kenmerken, bleek dat drie verschillende groepen daders onderscheiden kunnen worden: eenmalige daders (vrouwen die slechts 1 keer een zedendelict hebben gepleegd en verder geen andere delicten), generalistische daders (vrouwen die naast het plegen van hun zedendelict ook relatief veel andere ernstige delicten hebben gepleegd waaronder geweld en drugsdelicten) en specialistische daders (vrouwen die veel zedendelicten hebben gepleegd en daarnaast een klein aantal lichte niet-zeden delicten. Specialistische daders blijken vaker van autochtone afkomst, zijn in hun jeugd vaker seksueel misbruikt en hebben vaker een delinquente partner. Generalistische daders hebben vaker drugs gebruikt en zijn vaker verwaarloosd in hun jeugd. Vrouwen die het delict met een partner samenplegen zijn vaker specialistische daders, en deze specialistische daders maken vaker slachtoffers van beide seksen, dus zowel jongens als meisjes en slachtoffers zijn vaker een bekende. De gemiddelde leeftijd waarop de vrouwen voor het eerst voor een delict worden veroordeeld is 32,4 jaar, waarbij generalistische daders eerder beginnen met het plegen van delicten dan specialistische daders. De duur van de criminele carrière bij generalistische daders is significant langer dan bij specialistische daders. Generalistische daders hebben voor het uitgangsdelict ook significant meer delicten gepleegd dan de specialistische daders.

De kenmerken en motieven van jeugdige vrouwelijke zedendaders zijn bestudeerd in hoofdstuk vier. Bijna twee derde van de jeugdige daders heeft problemen op gebieden als psychische gezondheid, school en vrienden. Net zoals bij de volwassen vrouwen had bijna twee derde van de daders het delict met iemand samen gepleegd. Op basis van het strafdossier zijn de motieven gereconstrueerd. Hieruit kwam naar voren dat het delict kan worden gepleegd vanwege groepsdruk, vanwege emotie regulatie problemen, omdat er geld mee

verdiend kan worden, om seksueel te experimenteren of tegen de achtergrond van een psychische stoornis.

Uit kwalitatieve analyses bleek in hoofdstuk vijf dat dadergroepen drie verschillende doelen hebben om het zedendelict te plegen. Ten eerste kan het delictgedrag het doel hebben het slachtoffer te pesten. Ten tweede kan de groep het delict plegen vanwege seksuele bevrediging en ten derde omdat het wraak wil nemen op het slachtoffer. De redenen van de jeugdige vrouwelijke daders om het delict in groepsverband te plegen waren tweezijdig: of het was omdat ze de groep nodig had(den) voor het voltooien van het delict (instrumentele reden) of het was vanwege de druk die door de groep op haar werd uitgeoefend.

Conclusies

Uit dit proefschrift kunnen een aantal conclusies getrokken worden. Ten eerste valt op dat de meerderheid van zowel de volwassen als de jeugdige daders een medepleger heeft. Samenplegen lijkt daarmee kenmerkend voor vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten. Wel lijkt er een verschil te zijn voor volwassen en voor jeugdige daders. De volwassen daders geven soms aan dat ze door hun mededader (fysiek en/of mentaal) gedwongen zijn tot het plegen van het delict. De jeugdige daders daarentegen geven vaker aan dat ze hun mededaders zelf hebben geselecteerd omdat ze hen nodig hadden bij het plegen van het delict. De dynamiek van het samenplegen lijkt dus te verschillen voor de volwassen en jeugdige daders.

Ten tweede lijkt het erop dat de motieven van de vrouwelijke zedendaders niet overwegend seksueel van aard zijn. Enkele volwassen en jeugdige daders rapporteren dat ze het delict hebben gepleegd vanuit een seksuele nieuwsgierigheid, maar voor het merendeel lijkt het dat andere, niet-seksuele motieven zoals wraak of het uitoefenen van controle een rol hebben gespeeld.

Hiermee samenhangend valt het op dat bij de meerderheid van de volwassen daders (98%) geen seksuele stoornis is vastgesteld. Dit is opmerkelijk gezien het grote aantal minderjarige slachtoffers dat door deze vrouwen is gemaakt. Wellicht dat de seksuele voorkeur van de mannelijke mededader (een voorkeur voor jonge kinderen) hier een rol in speelt. Ook zou het zo kunnen zijn dat het lastig is om seksuele stoornissen en pedofiele interesses vast te stellen bij vrouwen.

Als vierde valt op dat slechts twee vrouwen na het indexdelict opnieuw veroordeeld zijn voor een zedendelict. Vergeleken met mannelijke zedendelinquenten (14%) lijkt dit percentage seksuele recidive laag.

Dit proefschrift heeft laten zien dat vrouwelijke zedendelinquenten bestaan: sommige vrouwen plegen soms zedendelicten. Meer onderzoek is nodig naar het ontstaan van zedendelinquentie bij vrouwelijke daders en de diverse factoren zoals samenplegen en gezinsdynamiek die hierbij een rol spelen.

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Curriculum vitae

Miriam Wijkman obtained in 2005 her masters degree in Law (with two specializations: Civil Law and Criminology). The same year she started working as a junior researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) in Leiden, where she started with a large-scale study on the intergenerational transmission of criminal behavior.

In 2007 she started studying Psychology at the VU University Amsterdam and she obtained her masters degree in developmental psychology in 2012.

Since 2007 she works as a lecturer at the VU University Amsterdam where she teaches and coordinates several courses at the department of Criminal Law and Criminology. In 2008 she started with her PhD research on female sexual offenders.

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